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Abstract

This dissertation is a history of construction work and the construction industry in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel, from British rule after World War I, through the first twenty-five years of Israeli statehood and Palestinians' ongoing Nakba (catastrophe). It is primarily a study of the relationship between the history of construction work and the construction industry in the literal sense, and between social and cultural processes frequently understood through construction as metaphor: nation- and state-building, and the construction of social difference. The dissertation examines these histories of construction in Israel/Palestine through multiple lenses, combining histories of labor, the body and the senses, race, political economy, and material culture. It analyzes the shifts from Zionist-Palestinian competition over work, resources and production under the British Mandate; through the transformation of the construction industry's workforce into one based on marginalized and racialized Mizrahi Jews (Jews from Muslim lands), and Palestinian citizens in Israel in the decades following Israel's establishment and the Nakba in 1948. I trace these shifts and their implications using sources from archives in Israel/Palestine, the United Kingdom, and the United States, newspapers, literature, film, workers' songs, trade publications, and oral history interviews. The dissertation argues that political economy, ecology, and culture alike made cement factories, quarries, construction sites, and workers' bodies into sites of Zionist and Palestinian nation-building, conflict, domination, and resistance. Meanwhile, workers' and their communities' use and understanding of these sites often defied and challenged an increasingly racialized and nationalist social order. Construction work and the construction industry thus played a pivotal role in the formation of racialized social hierarchies within Palestine/Israel.

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FOUNDATIONS OF INEQUALITY: CONSTRUCTION, POLITICAL ECONOMY, RACE, AND THE
BODY IN PALESTINE/ISRAEL, 1918-1973

Nimrod Ben-Zeev

A DISSERTATION

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History

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in

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2020

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FOUNDATIONS OF INEQUALITY: CONSTRUCTION, POLITICAL ECONOMY, RACE, AND THE
BODY IN PALESTINE/ISRAEL, 1918-1973

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Nimrod Ben Zeev

“We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The ‘tide in the affairs of men’ does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: ‘Too late.’”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence,” Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967

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This dissertation, like most projects of its kind, bears the name of a single author, but is in reality the product of the labor of countless others: mentors, teachers, administrators, archivists, librarians, interviewees, anonymous readers, colleagues, and of course, friends and family. Nor are these categories fixed. Individuals who have been part of this project in various ways have moved between them, often inhabiting multiple categories at once. Acknowledging the debts I owe to all of them and their respective contributions to the project in full is impossible. Accordingly, what follows is only a rough approximation of those debts and contributions, a way of expressing my gratitude and of making hidden work visible. There are, no doubt, those whose labor I have failed to include or capture to its full extent. They have both my gratitude and my apologies. Other, more specific debts are mentioned throughout the dissertation as well.

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ABSTRACT

FOUNDATIONS OF INEQUALITY: CONSTRUCTION, POLITICAL ECONOMY, RACE, AND THE
BODY IN PALESTINE/ISRAEL, 1918-1973

Nimrod Ben-Zeev

Eve Troutt Powell

This dissertation is a history of construction work and the construction industry in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel, from British rule after World War I, through the first twenty-five years of Israeli statehood and Palestinians' ongoing *Nakba* (catastrophe). It is primarily a study of the relationship between the history of construction work and the construction industry in the literal sense, and between social and cultural processes frequently understood through construction as metaphor: nation- and state-building, and the construction of social difference. The dissertation examines these histories of construction in Israel/Palestine through multiple lenses, combining histories of labor, the body and the senses, race, political economy, and material culture. It analyzes the shifts from Zionist-Palestinian competition over work, resources and production under the British Mandate; through the transformation of the construction industry's workforce into one based on marginalized and racialized Mizrahi Jews (Jews from Muslim lands), and Palestinian citizens in Israel in the decades following Israel's establishment and the Nakba in 1948. I trace these shifts and their implications using sources from archives in Israel/Palestine, the United Kingdom, and the United States, newspapers, literature, film, workers' songs, trade publications, and oral history interviews. The dissertation argues that political economy, ecology, and culture alike made cement factories, quarries,

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INTRODUCTION

“We do not come to Palestine as to a colony to benefit here by the labour of others. We have no intention of forming a skilled labour aristocracy by the side of native labourers to be looked upon as the ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water.’”

General Federation of Jewish Labour in
Palestine Memorandum to the British High
Commissioner, February 17, 1929

“They told me I’m lucky to even find a job. During the economic crisis, the Arab workers were the first to be thrown out. I’m lucky.... How did they call it in bible class? ‘Treasure cities,’ right? Treasure cities in Egypt. Gibeonites. Hewers of wood. That’s also from the bible. I have enough examples.”

Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, “I am Ahmad,”
1966

“[W]ho erected the buildings, paved the roads, dug and planted the earth of Israel, other than the Arabs who remained there?”

Emile Habiby, *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist*, 1974

This dissertation is a history of construction work and the construction industry in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel, from British rule after World War I, through the first twenty-five years of Israeli statehood and Palestinians’ ongoing *Nakba* (catastrophe). Defining it as such, however, may set expectations it will not be able to meet. That is to say, it is primarily a study of the relationship between the history of construction work and the construction industry in the literal sense, and between social and cultural

processes frequently understood through construction as metaphor: nation- and state-building, and the construction of social difference.

The dissertation examines these histories of construction in Israel/Palestine through multiple lenses, combining histories of labor, the body and the senses, race, political economy, and material culture. It analyzes the shifts from Zionist-Palestinian competition over work, resources and production under the British Mandate; through the transformation of the construction industry's workforce into one based on marginalized and racialized Mizrahi Jews (Jews from Muslim lands, pl. Mizrahim), and Palestinian citizens in Israel in the decades following Israel's establishment and the Nakba in 1948.

I trace these shifts and their implications using sources from archives in Israel/Palestine, the United Kingdom, and the United States, newspapers, literature, film, workers' songs, trade publications, and oral history interviews. The dissertation argues that political economy, ecology, and culture alike made cement factories, quarries, construction sites, and workers' bodies into sites of Zionist and Palestinian nation-building, conflict, domination, and resistance. Meanwhile, workers' and their communities' use and understanding of these sites often defied and challenged an increasingly racialized and nationalist social order. Construction work and the construction industry thus played a pivotal role in the formation of racialized social hierarchies within Palestine/Israel.¹

¹ Whenever discussing the period after the Palestinian Nakba and Israel's independence in 1948, I refer to the territory historically identified as Palestine (or Eretz Yisrael in Hebrew) as "Israel/Palestine" and "Palestine/Israel" interchangeably, to recognize both identifications of the land without granting preference or precedence to either.

Contesting Construction

Construction became a contested sphere in Palestine during the first half of the twentieth century because of its cultural and material importance for Zionists and Palestinians alike. In Zionist thought, construction's importance was manifested in two nationalist myths – “Hebrew labor” (*avoda ivrit*) and “building the land” (*binyan ha-aretz*). “Hebrew labor,” the principle according to which Jews in Palestine were meant to engage in all forms of labor, particularly manual productive labor, was considered a crucial component in the creation of a “new Jew”, able-bodied, masculine and wholly antithetical to the frail “diaspora Jew”. As competition with Palestinian Arab workers over employment became a major concern for the second wave of Zionist settlers in Palestine during the late Ottoman period, Hebrew labor evolved, fostering a call for the “conquest of labor” (*kibush ha-avoda*). It thus gained a more concrete economic role as well. In pushing for the exclusive employment of Jews by Jewish employers, the proponents of labor Zionism, a strand of Zionist thought which merged socialist ideals with Eastern European nationalism aimed to buttress the creation of a separate, independent Jewish economy, and the foundations of a state. “Building the land”, was equally important: to transform an allegedly barren Palestine into a Jewish homeland, it would have to be built anew. This aspect of the Zionist project required not only Hebrew construction workers, but a Hebrew industrial apparatus and the capital to establish and support it.²

² See: Anita Shapira, *Ha-Ma'avak ha Nikhazav: 'Avoda Ivrit, 1929–1939* [Futile Struggle: The Jewish Labor Controversy, 1929–1939] (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbutz ha-Meukhad, 1977); Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996 [1989]); Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Deborah S. Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries:*

Whereas most Zionist settlers and ideologues approached construction work as a novel realm to be “conquered,” in Palestine there was already an established building trade. Palestinian master builders (*mu‘allim al-bina’*), known for their distinctive styles, operated throughout the land, the products of their expertise populating Palestine’s coastal towns and the hilly areas of its interior. Rural lime kilns and stone quarries produced the mortar, plaster, and a variety of building stones – finely distinguished by kind and by finish – which builders then used. Construction was also deeply embedded in Palestinian culture and social life. In villages, the building of the family home was a collective effort and celebration, a “chief festive [event] (*farah*).” The home itself was an object of desire (*ghayat al-mana*), a provider of security and stability, and a signifier of social respectability and economic standing.³

Prior to the wide-scale adoption of Portland cement and concrete during the 1920s, rural limekilns (Arabic: *al-latun*) were the primary producers of mortar and plaster for Palestine’s stone-built architecture. Several forms of kilns were in use in the first half of the twentieth century. The earliest and most basic were stone-built structures fueled by brushwood. Diesel, crude oil, and coal-fueled kilns capable of industrial-levels of output and intended for commercial production, first came into use in the mid-to-late 1920s, ushered in by Palestinian capitalists such as the Haifa-based Tahir Qaraman. While

Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Michael Gluzman, *ha-Guf ha-Tsiyoni: Leumiut, Migdar, u-Miniut ba-Sifrut ha-Ivrit ha-Hadashah* [The Zionist Body: Nationalism, Gender and Sexuality in Modern Hebrew Literature] (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbutz ha-Meuhad, 2007).

³ Tawfiq Canaan, *The Palestinian Arab House, its Architecture and its Folklore* (Jerusalem: Syrian Orphanage Press, 1933), 82. On the institution of the *mu‘allim al-bina’*, see: Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

Portland cement (Arabic: *asmant* or *shimento*, Hebrew: *melet*) did eventually become the dominant mortar and concrete increasingly displaced stone, various forms of kilns, big and small, continued to operate throughout the period of British rule and beyond 1948.⁴

Alongside these established institutions, other ways of thinking about construction also emerged. Beginning in the late 1920s, Palestinian champions of “prosperity” (*‘umran*), “progress” (*taqaddum*, or *ruqiy*), and “development” (*taṭawwur*) – Palestine’s “men of capital” – started viewing construction as an integral component of a larger developmental project necessary for Palestine’s future.⁵ More specifically, they envisioned an independent, national, and modern construction industry, radically different than the land’s existing building trade.

Contestation over labor between Palestinian Arabs and Zionist Jews, and, as Chapter 1 shows, Zionist attempts to reshape Palestine’s construction industry, dated to the final decades of Ottoman rule. But it was only after Palestine came under British rule following World War I, that construction fully emerged as a locus of competing Palestinian and Zionist ambitions. This emergence was partially the result of developments in the construction industry itself, which I will describe below. However, it was also rooted in some of the broader changes that British rule, and specifically the British Mandate over Palestine introduced.

⁴ Jerusalem District Health Office, ‘Lime Kilns’ (8 May 1946), Israel State Archive (ISA), Mandatory Organizations-Mandate Health-0010dze; Omar Ahmad Hassan, “*Min al-Hiraf al-Sha’biyya - Sina’at al-Shid*” [From the Popular [or Folk] Crafts – The Lime Industry], *al-Turath wa-l-Mujtama’* 17 (1985): 103-21. A 1937 article from the Hebrew daily *Davar* describes an array of Palestinian Arab-owned kilns in the Migdal Tzedek quarry, which employed some Jewish as well as Palestinian Arab laborers and supplied large contracting firms. D. Zaslavsky, “Migdal Tzedek,” *Davar*, April 6, 1937, 3.

⁵ Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

Palestine Under the Mandate

British forces occupied Palestine in late 1917, following roughly 400 years of Ottoman rule in the land. The Mandate for Palestine, formed as part of the League of Nations' post-World War I system of mandates, was allocated to Britain at the April 1920 San Remo conference and officially commenced in 1923. Although it shared considerable similarities with other such mandates, particularly former Ottoman territories in the Middle East classified as "Class A" mandate states, the Mandate for Palestine was unique in important ways.

Like the other mandates, the Mandate for Palestine's formal goal was to prepare local populations, eventually, for self-rule. The anticipated path to such self-rule was determined in accordance with then dominant civilizational and racial hierarchies which constituted the "global color line." The Class A mandates were viewed as relatively close to meeting the conditions for independence. Class B and C mandates, primarily former German imperial territories in Africa and in the Pacific, respectively, were considered less prepared – either due to the perceived inferiority of their populations, their "sparseness," their "remoteness," or all of the above. Their periods of tutelage, accordingly, were to be longer.⁶

What set the British Mandate for Palestine apart from all its contemporaries, however, was that it incorporated a pre-existing document, the 1917 Balfour Declaration, into its preamble and thus its legal structure. The inclusion of the Balfour declaration

⁶ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), esp. Chapter 2.

meant that while the mandatory would safeguard the “civil and religious rights” of local Muslim and Christian populations, “political rights” – foremost of which was the future establishment of a “national home” – were reserved for the “Jewish people.” These rights referred not to a local Jewish population, but to the “Jewish people” as a whole. The mandate thus endorsed Zionism’s project of settlement and colonization. Muslim and Christian Palestinians, rather than being regarded as a national community or communities, were defined as “existing non-Jewish communities.”⁷

Although British administration of the Palestine Mandate was often inconsistent, for most of its existence it remained bound to this commitment to establishing a Jewish national home, ambiguous a term as that may have been. This granted the Jewish population in Palestine, and primarily the organized Zionist European settler community known as the New Yishuv (*ha-Yishuv ha-Hadash*, roughly translated as “the new community” or “settlement”) distinct advantages over the local Christian and Muslim population. It also placed the latter in a legal bind throughout their interactions with the Mandate’s administration. Furthermore, the Mandate’s structure, alongside British imperial racial thought, meant that while European Jews were considered capable of marching Palestine forward toward the Mandate’s economic and political goals, Palestinian Arabs were by and large not.⁸

⁷ Susan Pedersen, “Settler Colonialism at the Bar of the League of Nations,” in *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies*, eds. Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen, (London: Routledge, 2005), 124-129, cited in Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 5; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), 32-3.

⁸ Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*; Seikaly, *Men of Capital*; Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The period of British rule over Palestine was a period of immense political, social, economic, and technological changes. While these changes certainly did not come out of nowhere – many of them had their roots in the final decades of Ottoman rule – the pace of change during the British Mandate was often furious. Dramatic shifts were driven by the incorporation of Palestine into the British empire’s rapidly changing imperial formation, unprecedented waves of internal and external migration, large capital flows into the territory and world historical events.⁹

The flows of people and capital into Palestine, growing urbanization, and private, public, and government infrastructure and industrial projects meant that throughout the Mandate, construction constituted an uncharacteristically significant part of Palestine’s industry and economy. As construction work expanded, the industry itself also changed rapidly. Competition over labor between Jewish immigrants and Palestinians, a growing number of whom were forced into the urban workforce after Zionist land purchases pushed them off their tenant farms, increased.¹⁰ Zionist Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic newspapers closely followed the pace, or movement, of construction (Arabic: *harakat al-*

⁹ For works that describe various aspects of these changes from the late-Ottoman period onward, see, for example: Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856-1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development*, reprint edition (Washington, D.C: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2006 [1993]); May Seikaly, *Haifa: Transformation of an Arab Society* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995); Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Norris, *Land of Progress*; Seikaly, *Men of Capital*; Fredrik Meiton, *Electrical Palestine: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

¹⁰ On construction’s significance in Palestine’s economy, see: Jacob Metzer, *The Divided Economy of Mandatory Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25-26; Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries*, 85-86. On Palestinian labor migration into Palestine’s urban centers as a result of displacement during the Mandate, see: Mahmoud Yazbak, “From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (July 2000): 93–113; Charles Anderson, “From Petition to Confrontation: The Palestinian National Movement and the Rise of Mass Politics, 1929–1939” (PhD diss., New York University, 2013), 532-549.

bina’; Hebrew: *tnu ‘at ha-binyan*) – frequently dividing it neatly into “Jewish” and “Arab” building activities.¹¹

Palestine’s building materials industry also witnessed upheavals. Portland cement, a hydraulic cement patented in England in the early nineteenth century and produced by the fusing of limestone and aluminosilicates, was first imported into Palestine in the 1890s. Cement introduced unprecedented advantages to the building sector, allowing to erect buildings that were cheap and considered durable, at a rapid pace. As architectural critic, Or Alexandrovich, has argued, the significance of construction materials is never intrinsic to physical properties alone; rather, it is derived from how they have been employed historically and from the contexts that undergird their use – what Alexandrovich calls a “politics of building materials.”¹² Amidst several initiatives and calls for broader use of cement in the land during the initial decades of the twentieth century, it was such a politics that defined the attempts of some Zionist entrepreneurs to seek in cement and concrete a replacement for Palestinian stone and quicklime mortars, one that would grant a decisive advantage to Jewish laborers.¹³

In the first years after World War I, the volume of imported cement steadily increased. Then in 1923 the Russian-born Jewish industrialist Michael Pollak (1864-1954) established the Nesher Portland Cement Company. The company selected a plot of land outside the city of Haifa, which would soon become Palestine’s main port and a key

¹¹ See Chapter 1 below.

¹² Or Alexandrovich, “*Kurkar, Melet, ‘Aravim, Yehudim: Eikh Bonim ‘Ir ‘Ivrit*” [Gravel, Cement, Arabs, Jews: How to Build a Hebrew City], *Te’orya u-Vikoret: Bamah Yisra’elit* 36 (Spring 2010), 62.

¹³ ‘Concrete in Palestine’, *Cement Age* 10, no. 5 (May 1910), 371. I briefly discuss the history of early Zionist attempts to introduce modern cement and concrete as substitutes for local stone construction during the final decades of the Ottoman period in Chapter 1 below, relying primarily on Alexandrovich’s work. Alexandrovich, “*Kurkar, Melet.*”

British imperial hub. Nesher then set upon building what was to become Palestine's single largest industrial plant and its sole producer of cement.¹⁴ Nesher's monopoly, abetted by British policy, was met with Palestinian ventures to establish an alternative to the Jewish-owned factory. Palestinian capitalists turned outwards to "Arab cement" beyond Palestine's boundaries, demanding the British reduce the tariffs protecting Nesher's product. They also launched multiple endeavors to establish competing factories within Palestine itself. These ventures, discussed in Chapter 1, formed one part of the Palestinian project of "building the land," overshadowed in the historiography by its lauded Zionist counterpart.

Cement and concrete's rise did not mean stone's demise. Palestinian stone masons and stone dressers were severely hurt by the decline of building stones as structural elements in building due to the growing preponderance of concrete.¹⁵ However, stone in various forms – from the limestone necessary to feed Nesher's kilns, through façade cladding, to the smallest aggregate required to make concrete – remained an essential material. Here, in contrast to in cement production, the established Palestinian Arab quarrying industry clearly had the upper hand. Zionism's "conquest of stone" (*kibush ha-*

¹⁴ Moshe Ben-Ner, Menachem Aviram and Menachem Levi (eds.), *Ha-Melet ve-Yotzrav: ha-Ra'ayon u-Mimusho, 1923-2001* [Cement and its Makers: The Idea and its Fulfillment, 1923-2001] (Haifa: Nesher Portland Cement Company, 2002), 19-23.

¹⁵ Sir John Hope-Simpson, *Palestine: Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development* (London: HMSO, 1930), 133. The exception to the relative decrease in the use of structural stone in construction was Jerusalem, where a British ordinance required all buildings be made of local limestone. Only in 1944 did the British alter the ordinance to allow for stone façades as well. Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007), Chapter 1; Roberto Mazza, "The Preservation and Safeguarding of the Amenities of the Holy City without Favour or Prejudice to Race or Creed": The Pro-Jerusalem Society and Ronald Storrs, 1917–1926," in *Ordinary Jerusalem, 1840–1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global City*, eds. Angelos Dalachanis and Vincent Lemire (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 403–422.

even), the attempt to unseat Palestinian dominance in the industry, which is the subject of Chapter 2, began in earnest in the early 1920s. The “conquest” took multiple forms: from individuals who studied quarrying and stonework under local Palestinian masters, to capital-intensive attempts at mechanizing existing quarries and establishing mechanized Jewish-owned quarries. The conquest of stone’s consistent frustration revealed Zionism’s dependence on Palestinian expertise and sensibilities, as well the limits Palestine’s geology – the tangible, material land – set for Zionist ambitions.

The Nakba and the First Decades of the Israeli State

The end of British rule brought dramatic, and tragic, changes as well. In late 1947, following the United Nations’ (UN) approval of a plan to partition Palestine, proposed by the UN’s Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), civil war erupted. Already as the British gradually withdrew, Jewish militias – most of which would morph into the Israeli Defense Forces’ regular army following Israel’s declaration of independence when the Mandate terminated on May 14, 1948 – forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs from their homes through violence and intimidation. Palestinian’s forced migration continued as the civil war transformed into a regional one, when the standing armies of neighboring Arab countries intervened after the British had departed. By the time the war concluded in March 1949, over 750,000 Palestinians Arabs became refugees, spread

across the areas of Palestine which remained under Arab rule – the Jordanian-controlled West Bank and Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip – and neighboring Arab states.¹⁶

The events of 1947-1949, the Palestinian Nakba and Israel's War of Independence (*milḥemet ha- 'atzama 'ut*), generated immense demographic changes, which made construction once again a priority across the land. In the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and neighboring countries, the need to shelter hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees led to the construction of a network of refugee camps.¹⁷ At the same time, the new Israeli state had to house the hundreds of thousands of Jews, primarily Holocaust survivors from Europe and Mizrahi (Middle Eastern and North African) Jews, who arrived in the country in its initial years and roughly tripled its Jewish population. To do so, the state engaged in massive construction projects throughout its territory.¹⁸

Because of construction's central role in what many in Israel saw as the state's primary mission in its initial years – immigration absorption (*kliṭat 'aliya*) – “building the

¹⁶ An immense body of scholarship has been dedicated to the study of the Nakba and the various stages of the 1947-1949 war, as it transformed from a civil war within Palestine, into a war involving the armies of other Middle Eastern nations. For examples of different approaches in this literature, see: Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007 [2001]); Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Ariella Azoulay, *From Palestine to Israel: A Photographic Record of Destruction and State Formation, 1947-50* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

¹⁷ For studies of Palestinian refugee camps in Palestine and beyond, including from architectural and planning perspectives, see for example: Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon* (London: Zed Books, 1994); Julie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Fatima Abreek-Zubiedat, “The Architecture of the Palestinian ‘Refugee Camps’ in the West Bank: Dheisheh Refugee Camp as a Case Study 1948-1967,” (MSc thesis, Technion, 2015); Nasser Abourahme, “Assembling and Spilling-Over: Towards an ‘Ethnography of Cement’ in a Palestinian Refugee Camp,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 2 (2015): 200–217.

¹⁸ Yael Allweil, *Homeland: Zionism as Housing Regime, 1860-2011* (London: Routledge, 2017), esp. Chapter 6; Smadar Sharon, “Kakh Kovshim Moledet”: *Tikhnun u-Yishuv Hevel Lakhish be-Shnot ha-Hamishim* [“And Thus a Homeland is Conquered”: *Planning and Settlement in 1950s Lakhish Region*] (Haifa: Pardes Hotza'a la-Or, 2017).

land,” continued to be a national objective during the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, however, Israel’s economy became increasingly defined by an “ethnic division of labor,” relegating Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian citizens to the bottom of the occupational ladder.¹⁹ The more physical tasks involved in construction, many of which were classified as so-called “unskilled” or “semi-skilled” labor, and which as Chapter 3 shows, were already declining in status by the early 1940s, became “low-status” occupations.²⁰ By 1957, Mizrahi Jews made-up roughly 40% of the construction workforce. By 1962, Palestinian citizens in Israel were more than twice as likely as Jews to work in construction.²¹

Mizrahi immigrants were driven into construction work, agriculture, and other forms of manual labor as a result of economic necessity and European-Jewish elites’

¹⁹ Deborah Bernstein and Shlomo Swirski, “The Rapid Economic Development of Israel and the Emergence of the Ethnic Division of Labour,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 1 (1982): 64–85; Raja Khalidi, *The Arab Economy in Israel: The Dynamics of a Region’s Development*, (London: Croom Helm, 1988); Aziz Haidar, *On the Margins: The Arab Population in the Israeli Economy, 1949-90* (London: Hurst, 1995); Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

²⁰ Paul Rivlin, *The Israeli Economy from the Foundation of the State through the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 24.

²¹ For the data regarding the percentage of Mizrahi Jews (classified under the heading of “Asian & African born”) in different industries, see: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Surveys (1957)* (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1959), 40, cited in K.J. Mann, J.H. Abramson, A. Nitzan and Ruth Goldberg, “Epidemiology of Disabling Work Injuries in Israel,” *The Archives of Environmental Health* Vol. 9, No. 4 (1964), 511. There is some confusion regarding the statistics for Palestinian citizens in Israel in the workforce. In his seminal *The Arabs in Israel*, Sabri Jiryis presents data based on the *Statistical Abstract of Israel*. For most years, Jiryis calculates the number of Palestinians in the labor force based strictly on data provided in the *Abstract* (by deducting the number of Jews in the labor force from the overall labor force, since no separate statistics are given for Palestinians). However, for 1962, there is a considerable gap between the number Jiryis provides, and the results of this calculation. Accordingly, the percentage of Palestinian workforce employed in construction and public works in Jiryis’ calculation for 1962 is 19.1%, while a calculation according to the data in the 1963 *Abstract* shows it to be 16.2%. Jiryis’ figure for the percentage of Jews in the labor force employed in construction for 1962, 8.9%, is however, more accurate than the rounded-up figure of 9% provided in the *Abstract*. See: Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 304-305; Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 1963* (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1963), 498-501.

racialized conceptions of Mizrahim's affinity for unskilled, physical labor, an affinity they supposedly shared with Palestinians due to their "Arabness." Palestinian workers, under a military administration which restricted their movement and employment in Israel before 1966 and in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip after 1967, navigated the contradictions between their self-perceptions, subjugated position, and trauma at the hands of the state, and the needs of survival. Some were able to harness construction work for social mobility and the physical reconstruction of their homes and communities despite state restrictions - subverting the Zionist ideal of "to build and to be built" by claiming it themselves.

Relational History and Stepping Outside of Nationalism's Shadows

Scholarly and popular understandings of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict often overstate its history as driven chiefly by clashing ideologies, narratives, or other abstractions. There are, of course, bodies of literature which have been more attentive to the material aspects of this history. These include labor and economic histories, sociological studies, and most recently, histories of capitalism, science, and technology. Works within these bodies of literature have occasionally dealt with various moments in the history of construction work in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel through a variety of prisms: national and labor politics, concepts such as ethnic divisions of labor and dual economies, and discourses of development and modernity. Yet, for all the insight these works provide, the picture they portray can be alarmingly fragmentary. It is that of a history divided into neatly separated periods, and a society (or societies) divided into discreet

groups. This is also largely a history divorced from construction work as physical labor, from work's materials and processes, and from the lives which workers and their communities built.

The works of Zachary Lockman and Deborah Bernstein on the labor history of the British Mandate period are obvious touchstones for this dissertation.²² Both works break away from an earlier, primarily Zionist, body of scholarship which treated the histories of Arabs and Jews in Palestine as entirely separate and regarded interactions between both societies as external factors impacting their otherwise independent paths of development and change.²³ Instead, Lockman and Bernstein, building upon the earlier works of Baruch Kimmerling, Gershon Shafir, and Michael Shalev, view the interactions and the colonial “encounter” between Palestinian Arabs and Zionist Jews as integral, indeed, defining elements of both communities’ development. Lockman and Bernstein differ from Kimmerling, Shafir, and Shalev, in that they take yet another step further away from the Zionist historiography whose primary object was always the Yishuv.²⁴ The “relational

²² Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*; Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries*.

²³ The classic example of this earlier approach to the history of labor during the Mandate is: Shapira, *Ha-Ma'avak ha-Nikhzav*.

²⁴ Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1983); Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1983); Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996 [1989]); Michael Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy in Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*; Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries*. Shafir, Shalev, and Bernstein in particular, are indebted to Edna Bonacich's Split Labor Market theory, which proposes a model for the study of societies in which two groups differentiated by race, ethnicity, or nationality – and importantly also by their relationship to state and capitalist power – meet in a single labor market. Bonacich argues that in such societies, labor market competition is a driving force behind racist and nationalist politics and divides among the working classes. See: Edna Bonacich, “A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market,” *American Sociological Review* 37, no. 5 (1972): 547–59; Edna Bonacich, “Class Approaches To Ethnicity and Race,” *Insurgent Sociologist* 10, no. 2 (October 1980): 9–23; Edna Bonacich, “Comments on ‘Class Approaches to Ethnicity and Race,’” *Critical Sociology* 25, no. 2–3 (March 1999): 163–65.

history” Lockman and Bernstein pursue – a term Lockman adopted and which has since inspired a body of work which focuses on late-Ottoman and Mandate-era Palestine – is equally interested in the ways both Palestinian Arab society and the Zionist settler community were shaped, the boundaries between them constructed and defined by their interactions and relationships.²⁵

Lockman and Bernstein’s studies were not the first works to eschew nationalist frameworks in their treatment of the Mandate era, nor the first to take seriously the role of factors beyond nationalism in their analyses.²⁶ However, the impact of Lockman’s work in particular, has extended well beyond studies which take up the mantle of “relationality” directly, ushering in a wave of studies which sought to “move beyond nationalism.”²⁷ This desire to explore what lies outside of nationalism’s shadow, has brought forth critical histories of political economy, development, infrastructure and materiality, like Jacob Norris’s study of Ottoman and British development policy in Palestine, Sherene Seikaly’s history of Palestine’s evolving capitalist *nahda* (renaissance) during the 1930s and 1940s, and Fredrik Meiton’s work on the history of Palestine’s

²⁵ Among the works which have, explicitly or implicitly, adopted the relational paradigm to the study of late-Ottoman and British Mandate-era Palestine, see: LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography*; Michele U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*. See also: Yair Wallach, *A City in Fragments: Urban Text in Modern Jerusalem* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming). Bernstein herself does not use the term, perhaps also because she had written much of *Constructing Boundaries* prior to the publication of Lockman’s book, but her work is clearly of a similar mind.

²⁶ Elia T. Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919-1948 Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism*, reprint edition (Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books, 2010 [1979]); ‘Abd al-Qadir Yasin, *Tarikh al-Tabaqa al-‘Amila al-Filastiniyya, 1918-1948* [History of the Palestinian Working Class, 1918-1948] (Beirut: Markaz al-Abhath, Munazamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya, 1980); Joel Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Barbara J. Smith, *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine: British Economic Policy, 1920-1929* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

²⁷ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 13.

electrification, all of which touch upon aspects of the construction industry with which this dissertation is preoccupied.²⁸

This dissertation embraces the fundamental aspects of the relational approach to the history of Israel/Palestine, while expanding its scope to the years after 1948 and remaining attentive to some of the critiques which have been directed at relational history since its introduction into the field of Palestine/Israel Studies in the mid-1990s. I view Zionist and Palestinian history and Zionist and Palestinian self-perceptions as co-constitutive. While the beginnings of each may perhaps be traced separately, they nonetheless became deeply entangled throughout the twentieth century.²⁹

With Lockman and Bernstein, and Shafir before them, I see labor in Mandate Palestine as a central arena for the formation of national self-perceptions and boundaries between communities in Mandate Palestine. At the same time, I agree with Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg's call for a "relationality that works more expansively in both scale and kind."³⁰ This dissertation attempts to achieve such "expansive" relationality in two ways. First, through pursuing what Stein and Swedenburg call "transnational

²⁸ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*; Norris, *Land of Progress*; Meiton, *Electrical Palestine*.

²⁹ The "separateness" of Zionism is, of course, precisely the conventional wisdom which the works of Kimmerling, Shafir, Lockman, and Bernstein, among others, sought to challenge. Pinpointing the ways in which Palestinian nationalism and self-perceptions evolved independently of Zionism, in contrast, has been considerably more contested, although one hopes this is changing as scholarship continues to foreground histories of Palestinian nationalism which either preceded Zionism or in which "reaction" to Zionism was not a primary driver. For earlier examples of this literature, see: Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003); Camille Mansour and Leila Fawaz (eds.), *Transformed Landscapes: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East in Honor of Walid Khalidi* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009).

³⁰ Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg, "Popular Culture, Relational History, and the Question of Power in Palestine and Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 4 (2004), 10.

relationality,” by drawing Israel/Palestine into broader conversations about racialized bodies and global racial politics. That is, by considering how Palestinian Arabs, Zionist Jews, and others located themselves along what W.E.B. Du Bois called “the color line.”³¹ And second, through a examining a relationality that is arguably different “in kind” – how building materials, geology, and political economy all took part in forming Palestine/Israel’s relational matrix. Doing so, I believe, also addresses two additional critiques of the relational paradigm. The first, that it continues to portray Palestinians as essentially reactive. The second, that it risks obfuscating the structural power differential between Zionism’s settler colonial national movement, and Palestinians’ indigenous one.³²

Jewish Physical Regeneration and Palestine’s Labor Question

When late-nineteenth-century Zionist thinkers such as Max Nordau (1849-1923), Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), and others articulated their vision for Jewish nationalism and national regeneration, they did not operate in an ideological vacuum. Alongside Zionism’s unique components, their thinking also drew upon contemporary European nationalist discourses.³³ Among those elements drawn from European nationalisms was the notion that the Jewish people’s national regeneration was dependent in part on the

³¹ W. E. B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015 [1903]).

³² Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 9. Rana Barakat, “Reading Palestinian Agency in Mandate History: The Narrative of the Buraq Revolt as Anti-Relational,” *Contemporary Levant* 4, no. 1 (January 2019): 28–38.

³³ There are numerous intellectual histories of Zionism. See, for example: Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, 2nd edition (Basic Books, 2017 [1981]); Michael Brenner, *In Search of Israel : The History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

physical reform of individual Jewish bodies.³⁴ As Todd Presner has argued, the figure of the “new Jew” (*ha-yehudi ha-ḥadash*) and the accompanying ideal of “muscular Judaism,” characteristic of the Zionism of Nordau, Herzl, and some of their peers, demonstrated “an affinity with some of the more unsavory ‘regenerative’ discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, particularly Social Darwinism, eugenics, nationalism, and colonialism.”³⁵ This affinity, Presner claims, arose “precisely because Zionism was both a Jewish response to- and extension of these very same discourses.”³⁶

Like the “muscular Christianity” popular in the United States and Britain, the *Lebensreform* (life reform) movement in Germany, and parallel movements in the Middle East, such “muscular Judaism” encouraged young Jews in Europe to engage in gymnastics and serve in their homelands’ militaries.³⁷ In Palestine, meanwhile, physical labor constituted a crucial component of this regenerative project. There, Zionist thinkers argued, the renewed symbiosis between Jewish workers and the land itself would propel forward the process of regeneration. By working the land of Palestine, bettering it, and building upon it, “new Jews” and a revitalized Jewish nation would emerge.³⁸

³⁴ Gluzman, *Ha-Guf ha-Tsiyoni*, 2007; Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007); Nadia Abu El-Haj, *The Genealogical Science the Search for Jewish Origins and the Politics of Epistemology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

³⁵ Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, 4.

³⁶ Presner. See also: Meira Weiss, *The Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Gluzman, *Ha-Guf ha-Tsiyoni*; Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

³⁷ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Presner, *Muscular Judaism*; Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Murat Cihan Yildiz, “Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities: Physical Culture in the Late Ottoman Empire” (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2015).

³⁸ Presner, *Muscular Judaism*; Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism*, trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

The project of physical regeneration through manual labor, however, encountered significant difficulties. As mentioned above, beginning with the first wave of European Zionist settlement in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish employers found Palestinian Arab workers were often willing to perform identical work for considerably lower wages than their less experienced and skilled European Jewish counterparts. Accordingly, employers often showed a distinct preference towards hiring the former. In response, members of the second wave of Zionist immigration from Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, many of whom were property-less and in dire need of employment, embarked on what became known as the “conquest of labor.” Their goal was to guarantee the exclusive employment of Jews by Jewish employers.³⁹

Contemporary Zionist observers construed this “conquest,” as an uphill battle. The reasons for this, they argued, were the different bodily and economic needs, cultural capacities, political acumen, physical abilities and professional skills of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and Palestinian Arabs. While Eastern European Jewish immigrants sought wage labor as their primary source of livelihood, Zionist thinkers and public figures claimed, Palestinian workers often used wages as supplemental income alongside subsistence farming. Palestinians were therefore willing to work for shorter periods of time than immigrants looking for permanent employment, a boon to employers in seasonal agriculture as well as in the construction industry. Moreover, Palestinian workers were often willing to work for lower wages than Eastern European Jews.

³⁹ Shapira, *Ha-Ma'avak ha-Nikhzav*; Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy*; Shafir, *Land, Labor*; Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*; Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries*; Shaul A. Duke, *The Stratifying Trade Union: The Case of Ethnic and Gender Inequality in Palestine, 1920-1948* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

This wage differential was naturalized by the Zionist leadership and others, by linking it to Palestinians' supposedly lower "standard of living" compared to Eastern European Jewish workers – a concept which, as Chapter 2 shows, came under Palestinian criticism for its racial nature. Employers also saw Palestinian workers as less inclined to demand rights through the language of organized labor than their Eastern European Jewish counterparts and thus as easier to exploit. Finally, Zionist observers perceived a difference in skill between Palestinians and Eastern European Jews across various forms of labor. Gershon Shafir cites Zionist descriptions of "Arab workers" who worked from childhood, and thus embodying the skills necessary for labor in "all [their] limbs."⁴⁰ The Eastern European Jewish immigrant, meanwhile, was often inexperienced, required training, and was frequently regarded as "[lacking] the physical strength and stamina required for agricultural labor."⁴¹

Zionist functionaries often portrayed Mizrahim too as "natural workers," using similar racializing terms to those they applied to Palestinian Arabs. They described Mizrahim as better suited for physical labor but lacking in intellect, technical capacities and culture, and their material and cultural needs – that is, their "standard of living" – as lesser than those of Eastern European Jews. Therefore, the argument went, like Palestinian Arabs, Mizrahim could be paid lower wages.

⁴⁰ Yaakov Levine, cited in Shafir, *Land, Labor*, 57.

⁴¹ Shafir, *Land, Labor*, 57. The strategy which Zionist settlers employed as part of the "conquest of labor," and which eventually gained permanence, was what Shafir refers to as "monopolization of skills." This model, which resembled the French model for viniculture in Algeria, Tunisia and also in the French wine region of Languedoc, divided skilled, and therefore, higher paying jobs, and unskilled work along racial or class lines onto which its advocates mapped differences in "intelligence" and "culture." As Chapters 1 and 2 show, these caste-like divisions became an important device for Zionist efforts to infiltrate the building trades as well. Shafir, *Land, Labor*, 65-69.

As early as 1911, this notion of similarity between Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian Arabs – which extended also to understandings of their climatic suitability to Palestine – animated the mission of the labor Zionist activist, Shmuel Yavnieli, to Yemen. The purpose of Yavnieli's mission, promoted by Arthur Ruppin's Palestine Office and the Planter's Union, which represented the planter class of the first wave of Zionist settlement, was to encourage Yemeni Jewish immigration to Palestine. New Yemeni immigrants, the mission's architects argued, could join the existing Yemeni community in Palestine, many of whom had immigrated in 1881, roughly concurrently with the first groups of European Zionist settlers. As "Hebrew labor," they could then substitute Palestinian Arab workers, while receiving similar wages and working conditions to those of the latter. That is, they would provide a path towards a conquest of labor which accorded with the planter class' economic interests.⁴²

After 1948: Colonial Continuities

Looking beyond the Mandate to the period after the Nakba and Israeli independence, the early decades of the Israeli state and specifically the state's relationship with the Palestinians who remained within its boundaries have long constituted, in Shira

⁴² Yosef Meir, *Ha-Tn'ua ha-Tziyonit ve-Yehudei Teiman: Shlihutu shel Yavnieli be-Or Hadash* [The Zionist Movement and the Jews of Yemen: Yavnieli's Mission in a New Light] (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Afikim, 1982); Shafir, *Land, Labor*, Chapter 4; Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), Chapter 3. Etan Bloom points to Arthur Ruppin's reliance on eugenic thinking in his approach to Yemeni and other Mizrahi Jews. Yehuda Sharim discusses how Mizrahi-Sephardic intellectuals adopted, challenged, and adapted these ideas about Mizrahi bodies and capacities during the Mandate period. Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin*; Yehuda Sharim, "The Struggle for Sephardic-Mizrahi Autonomy: Racial Identities in Palestine-Israel, 1918-1948" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2013).

Robinson's words, a "black hole" in historical scholarship.⁴³ Robinson correctly points out that especially in the aftermath of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, the nineteen years which passed between 1948 and 1967, began to be viewed through rose-tinted glasses. Liberal critics of Israel's occupation, both within and outside of Israel, came to see the years before 1967 as the state's "period of innocence."

And yet, as mentioned above, between 1948 and 1966, the majority of Palestinians within Israel were governed under a military administration, which drastically curtailed their freedoms and rights and Mizrahi Jews suffered harsh discrimination. For a significant period, works that critically examined Israel's first decades, including the military administration, were few and far between.⁴⁴ However, the past decade has seen a surge of innovative scholarship dedicated to their study. Hillel Cohen's *Good Arabs* and Robinson's, *Citizen Strangers*, were arguably the harbingers of this wave, followed by works by Yael Berda, Leena Dallasheh, Maha Nassar, Arnon

⁴³ Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 4-5.

⁴⁴ Among these, Sabri Jiryis' classic *The Arabs in Israel*, first published in Hebrew in 1966 and translated into multiple languages, remains an invaluable source on the period. Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*. Other important works include: Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel*; Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980); Majid al-Haj, *Education, Empowerment, and Control: The Case of the Arabs in Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Yair Bäuml, *Tzel Kahol Lavan: Mediniyut ha-Mimsad ha-Isra'eli u-Fe'ulotav be-Kerev ha-Ezrahim ha-'Aravim be-Israel: ha-Shanim ha-Me'atzvot: 1958-1968* [A Blue and White Shadow: The Israeli Establishment's Policy and Actions among its Arab Citizens: The Formative Years: 1958-1968] (Haifa: Hotza'a la-Or, 2007). The geographer Ghazi Falah has authored multiple studies on the Israeli state's land policies vis-à-vis Palestinian citizens in Israel. See: Ghazi Falah, "Israeli 'Judaization' Policy in Galilee," *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 1991): 69-85; Ghazi Falah, "The 1948 Israeli-Palestinian War and Its Aftermath: The Transformation and De-Signification of Palestine's Cultural Landscape," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 2 (1996): 256-85. In Hebrew, Sarah Ozacky-Lazar has written considerably about the period as well.

Degani, Lana Tatour, and others.⁴⁵ Much of this scholarship, as the introduction to Chapter 3 discusses, is dedicated to examining the continuities of colonial government policies toward Palestinians between the British Mandate and Israeli rule, as well as the Israeli state's continued commitment to the settler colonial nature of the Zionist project in Palestine. This dissertation contributes to this emerging literature by demonstrating how such colonial continuities manifested in the realm of labor. The division of labor which developed in Israel's initial decades, I argue, was largely the outgrowth of colonial and racial hierarchies established during the Mandate.

Divisions of Labor in the Israeli State

That Israel's labor market was a segmented one already in the early 1950s, is hardly a novel argument. Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian citizens in Israel were disproportionately tracked into "unskilled" manual labor, dominating lower-tier jobs in branches like construction and agriculture. However, the scholarship on the period has, for the most part, discussed it as though there existed two parallel and separate divisions of labor: an

⁴⁵ Hillel Cohen, *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948–1967*, trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*; Yael H. Berda, "Colonial Legacy and Administrative Memory: The Legal Construction of Citizenship in India, Israel and Cyprus," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2014); Leena Dallasheh, "Troubled Waters: Citizenship and Colonial Zionism in Nazareth," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 3 (August 2015): 467–87; Leena Dallasheh, "Persevering through Colonial Transition: Nazareth's Palestinian Residents after 1948," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45, no. 2 (February, 2016): 8–23; Arnon Yehuda Degani, "The Decline and Fall of the Israeli Military Government, 1948–1966: A Case of Settler-Colonial Consolidation?" *Settler Colonial Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 2015). Maha Nassar, *Brothers Apart: Palestinian Citizens of Israel and the Arab World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Lana Tatour, "Citizenship as Domination: Settler Colonialism and the Making of Palestinian Citizenship in Israel," *Arab Studies Journal* XXVII, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 8–39. The *Arab Studies Journal* has been a particularly fruitful outlet for studies of the period. See: Benny Nuriely, "The Hunger Economy: The Military Government in the Galilee, Ramle, and Lydda, 1948–1949," *Arab Studies Journal* XXVII, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 64–84; Lily Eilan, "Paradise Lost: Land and Labor in 1950s Galilee," *Arab Studies Journal* XXVIII, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 84–111.

intra-Jewish division, between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim; and a second “external” division, between Jews and Palestinians.

Israeli government officials, social scientists, and frequently also public discourse justified and explained Mizrahi Jews’ proletarianization during the 1950s and 1960s by relying on then-popular modernization approaches. Such approaches argued that Mizrahi immigrants were overrepresented in low-status, manual labor because of their need to adjust to the transition from the “traditional” societies from whence they came, to the already developed Israeli society. These approaches were paired with discourses of physical and spiritual regeneration, like those applied previously primarily to European Jews. The core idea of forming “new Jews” through manual labor remained similar, but Mizrahi Jews were now its primary wanting objects.⁴⁶ However, as Bernstein and Swirski have shown, 1950s Israel was hardly a developed industrial economy which would require such an adjustment process. Rather, it was precisely the proletarianization of Mizrahi Jews which allowed the state to industrialize and develop rapidly during its early decades.⁴⁷

State officials and the advocates of modernization theory applied a similar explanation to the proletarianization of Palestinian citizens in Israel during those decades, albeit stripped of most of its redemptive dimensions, since Arabs remained essentially inassimilable. The products of “traditional” Arab rural society, their proletarianization was a phase in their acculturation to the modern Israeli one.⁴⁸ However, despite these

⁴⁶ Bernstein and Swirski, “The Rapid Economic Development,” 82.

⁴⁷ Bernstein and Swirski, “The Rapid Economic Development.”

⁴⁸ Khalidi, *The Arab Economy in Israel*, 9-13.

affinities, Bernstein and Swirski's work and later investigations of the emergence of an ethnic division of labor among Jews in Israel rarely consider the place of Palestinian citizens in this division. Similarly, studies of the proletarianization of Palestinian citizens seldom mention the parallel process of Mizrahi proletarianization.⁴⁹

This tendency to treat each of these histories as though they were separate, has had serious repercussions for our understanding of the formation of social hierarchies in Israel/Palestine after 1948. Alongside the tendency of scholarship on the ethnic division of labor to define the establishment of the state as the division of labor's starting point, it is partially responsible for what Yehouda Shenhav has described as the tendency of critical scholarship on Mizrahim in Israel to "miss out... on the colonial history" undergirding it.⁵⁰

To recapture both this colonial history and "the contemporary colonial reality," Shenhav's *The Arab Jews* studies the interactions between Zionist emissaries, Iranian and Indian workers, and Iraqi Jews, which took place on the backdrop of the construction projects carried out in Abadan, Iran by Solel Boneh, the contracting arm of the Palestine-

⁴⁹ Bernstein and Swirski, "The Rapid Economic Development"; Khalidi, *The Arab Economy in Israel*; Haidar, *On the Margins*; Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries*. For a different approach, albeit one examining a later period, in which the Mizrahi and the Palestinian experiences of labor and class mobility are studied alongside one another, see: Rami Adut, "'Ve-ha-Kol be-'Atzmi, Kim 'at!' Havnayot 'Atzmi 'Oved be-Kerev 'Aravim u-Mizrahim be-Mahalakh Mobiliyut la-Ma'amad ha-Beynoni: Mikrei Mivhan – Beit Safafa u-Gilo be-Yerushalaim" ['All by Myself, Almost!'] Constructing a 'Working-Self' among Arabs and Mizrahim as Part of Mobility into the Middle Class: Case Studies – Beit Safafa and Gilo in Jerusalem] (PhD diss. Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2017).

⁵⁰ Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 55. It is perhaps unsurprising that critical studies of Palestinian citizens' marginalization and oppression in Israel have tended to be more attuned to this colonial history, that is, to the impact of the colonial encounter with Zionism and British rule on the Palestinians in the decades prior to 1948 and on the realities and experiences of Palestinians in Israel after 1948. This is true also for some studies which predated the recent wave of works mentioned above by Robinson, Berda, and Dallasheh. See: Henry Rosenfeld, "The Class Situation of the Arab National Minority in Israel," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 3 (1978): 374–407; Khalidi, *The Arab Economy*.

based Histadrut (the Zionist General Federation of Trade Unions). Between 1942 and 1944, Solel Boneh carried out construction at Abadan after receiving a tender from the British army. Alongside the works, the Yishuv's leadership used the project as cover for sending Zionist emissaries to Iraq, to build ties with the longstanding and deeply rooted local Jewish community. Shenhav argues that the circumstances which surrounded the Abadan project – a meeting point between an explicitly imperial task on behalf of the British, and the nationalist task of engaging with Iraq's Jewish community – made it a “terminus a quo [“zero point”] of relations between Zionism and the Arab Jews.”⁵¹ These relations, he claims, were historically defined precisely by such a meeting point, between Zionism's colonial and nationalist facets. From the Zionist perspective, Arab Jews were both racialized, “ethnic subjects” and “possible candidates for integration into the Zionist project.”⁵²

That Shenhav locates this “zero point” at the construction sites of Abadan is, I would argue, more than merely fortuitous. Rather, it indicates the pivotal role which construction work and the construction industry played in the nexus between nationalism, colonialism, empire, and race in the twentieth-century history of Israel/Palestine – a role which extended even beyond the geography of the land itself.⁵³ Many of the themes

⁵¹ Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 33.

⁵² Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 69.

⁵³ In addition to Shenhav's study of the Abadan works, Haim Yacobi and Ayala Levin have explored the activities of Israeli contracting firms – most prominently Solel Boneh – and Israeli architects in several postcolonial African nations starting in the mid-1950s. They both show how these activities drew together colonial pasts, postcolonial nationalisms, and ideas about race and modernity. Haim Yacobi, *Israel and Africa: A Genealogy of Moral Geography* (London: Routledge, 2016); Ayala Levin, “Exporting Architectural National Expertise: Arie Sharon's Ile-Ife University Campus in West-Nigeria (1962-1976),” in *Nationalism and Architecture*, eds. Raymond Quek, Darren Deane, and Sarah Butler (London: Ashgate, 2012): 53–66; Ayala Levin, “Haile Selassie's Imperial Modernity: Expatriate Architects and the Shaping of Addis Ababa,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75, no. 4 (December, 2016): 447–68.

which Shenhav describes as unfolding in Abadan – Zionism’s need to navigate between nationalism’s valorization of manual labor and the colonial denigration of such labor; European Zionists’ often uneasy attempts to situate themselves in relation to a colonial racial hierarchy and division of labor and their conditional position as “white”; and the strains political economy placed on both – were, as Chapters 2 and 3 show, at stake already in Mandate Palestine as early as the 1920s.⁵⁴

Racialized Bodies, Racial Politics, and Colonial Legacies

Race and racial politics have had a strange career in discussions of modern Palestine/Israel. The categories are seemingly everywhere. Yet the ways in which they have operated historically remain opaque, even if examining them is no longer entirely taboo.⁵⁵ The question of “racism” – often encoded primarily as group discrimination disconnected from ideas about race per se as well as their histories – has featured

⁵⁴ Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, Chapters 1 and 2. As will become apparent, the literature on-, and the historical processes of-, Mizrahi racialization in Zionist thought and practice are closely linked to the history this dissertation narrates. Regrettably, aside from sections of Chapters 3 and 4, which deal explicitly with Mizrahi Jews in Palestine/Israel’s construction industry, the bulk of the dissertation only gestures toward the sort of integrative approach to Palestinian and Mizrahi history which the work of scholars like Ella Shohat, Gershon Shafir, and Yehouda Shenhav has laid the groundwork for. Shohat is largely credited with introducing this integrative approach into academic scholarship in a pathbreaking 1988 article in *Social Text*. She points out that outside the confines of academia, Mizrahi political movements like the Black Panthers – named after the Black American which inspired them – embraced such integrative politics, binding Mizrahi and Palestinian histories and futures together, already in the mid-1970s. Shafir’s analysis of the Yavnieli Mission as part of a study focused on the “origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” remains a significant contribution. Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims,” *Social Text*, no. 19/20 (1988): 1–35; Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Chapter 4; Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*.

⁵⁵ Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 12–14.

prominently in popular and scholarly discourse about Palestine/Israel.⁵⁶ The history of racial thought is at the heart of studies of Jewish, Zionist and Palestinian early engagements with bio-racism.⁵⁷ Questions of racial politics animate applications of the settler colonial framework to the study of Israel/Palestine and analyses of the racial underpinnings of the land's twentieth-century citizenship regimes.⁵⁸ Much of the critical scholarship on the experiences of Mizrahim, too, elucidates the racial components of their discrimination in Israel.⁵⁹ Most recently, activists and scholars have explored historical

⁵⁶ Ronit Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 84-8; Matan Kaminer, "Connections Yet Unmade: The Reception of Race, Nation, Class in Israel," in *Balibar/Wallerstein's "Race, Nation, Class": Rereading a Dialogue for Our Times*, eds. Manuela Bojadžijev and Katrin Klingan (Hamburg: Argument Verlag and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2018): 170-7.

⁵⁷ Following Karen and Barbara Fields, I use the term "bio-racism," rather than the more commonly used "race science" to refer to the body of theories and research which sought to "scientifically" anchor racial ideologies in human biology. I find the reasoning behind Fields and Fields argument for this less common appellation compelling, as it highlights the fact that "[f]or all the measuring and experimenting that ['race science'] research inspired, it failed as science." Karen Elise Fields and Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London: Verso Books, 2012), 4. Since the 1990s, there have been numerous studies on Jewish engagements with bio-racism. Jonathan Marc Gribetz's *Defining Neighbors*, is, to the best of my knowledge, the only work which discusses Palestinian engagements with the issue. John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Mitchell B Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Presner, *Muscular Judaism*; Dafna Hirsch, "Zionist Eugenics, Mixed Marriage, and the Creation of a 'New Jewish Type,'" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. 3 (2009): 592-609; Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Abu Nadia Abu El-Haj, *The Genealogical Science the Search for Jewish Origins and the Politics of Epistemology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors*; Raphael Falk, *Zionism and the Biology of Jews* (Cham: Springer, 2019).

⁵⁸ Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*; Berda, "Colonial Legacy"; Rana Barakat, "Writing/Righting Palestine Studies: Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Sovereignty and Resisting the Ghost(s) of History," *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 3 (July, 2018): 349-63; Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham: Duke University press, 2018); Ronit Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception*; Tatour, "Citizenship as Domination." Rana Barakat traces the evolution of the application of the settler colonial framework from early Palestinian uses to the more recent scholarly "boom," thus offering a corrective to contemporary notions that the framework's use is somehow "new," and introduced primarily by Western or Israeli scholars. Ronit Lentin offers a similar corrective, albeit to a different end.

⁵⁹ Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel"; Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*; Sharim, "The Struggle for Sephardic-Mizrahi Autonomy"; Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle 1948-1966* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015); Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Yali Hashah, "Kulanu Yehudim: 'Al 'Zevel Lavan', Mizrahim ve-Shuliyut Meruba be-Tokh ha-Hegmonia" [We Are All Jews: White Trash, Mizrahim, and Multiple

and contemporary networks of global Black-Palestinian solidarity rooted in anti-racist and anti-colonial politics.⁶⁰

Outside of a few notable exceptions, however, historicizing the processes of racialization in Palestine/Israel – that is, how Palestinian Arabs and Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews came to be regarded as possessing different physical, intellectual, and cultural qualities – has remained largely beyond the purview of most of this scholarship. The same is true for the historical relationship between racial thought and racial politics: how racialization has shaped and sustained social hierarchies in Israel/Palestine over time.⁶¹

By examining the racialization of construction labor in Palestine/Israel from the period of British rule to the early decades of the Israeli state, this dissertation argues that racialized conceptions of difference between and among Jews and Arabs were foundational to the formation of twentieth-century Palestine/Israel's social hierarchies. The dissertation demonstrates how concepts of Arab and Mizrahi suitability for physical labor as opposed to European Jewish intellectual superiority, and of Arabs' and Mizrahim's lesser material and cultural needs, shaped Mandate Palestine's and the Israeli

Marginalities Within the Hegemony], *Te'orya u-Vikoret*, no. 48 (Summer 2017): 249-264; Smadar Lavie, *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel: Mizrahi Single Mothers and Bureaucratic Torture*, revised edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018 [2014]).

⁶⁰ Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016); Michael R. Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); Noura Erekat and Marc Lamont Hill, eds. "Black Palestinian Transnational Solidarity." Special issue, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019).

⁶¹ For works which do address these questions, some more so than others, see: Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*; Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries*; Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*; Sharim, "The Struggle for Sephardic-Mizrahi Autonomy"; Berda, "Colonial Legacy"; Tatour, "Citizenship as Domination."

state's divisions of labor, relegating Palestinians and Mizrahim to "inferior" labor and social status. In doing so, I follow scholarship which argues that, at its core, racialization operates upon and marks physical bodies, and works examining the racialization of labor in the Middle East and elsewhere.⁶²

The dissertation shows that these racializing processes, and the racial projects of which they were part, were embedded in regional, imperial, and global discourses about race, culture, and the body.⁶³ These ranged from European-inspired Zionist ideas about collective and individual degeneration and regeneration, through British racial attitudes toward laboring bodies, to the transnational engagements of Jews and Arabs with the concepts of whiteness and racial hierarchy and appeals to anti-racist politics. The

⁶² For the body as the object of racism and racialization, see: Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81; Sara Ahmed, "Racialized Bodies," in *Real Bodies: A Sociological Introduction*, eds. Mary Evans and Ellie Lee (London: Macmillan Education UK, 2002): 46–63; Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, third edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015 [1986]). Earlier editions of Omi and Winant's study had, according to the authors' admission, "largely undertheorized" the body, an issue which the third edition attempts to address. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, viii. For the racialization of labor, including works which focus on the Middle East, see: Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (London: Verso, 2009); Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Marta Maria Maldonado, "'It Is Their Nature to Do Menial Labour': The Racialization of 'Latino/a Workers' by Agricultural Employers," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 6 (2009): 1017–1036; Paul R. D. Lawrie, *Forging a Laboring Race: The African American Worker in the Progressive Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2016); Arbella Bet-Shlimon, *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); On Barak, *Powering Empire: How Coal Made the Middle East and Sparked Global Carbonization* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

⁶³ For the notion of "racial projects," see: Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*.

dissertation thus demonstrates how local actors in Palestine/Israel placed themselves and others along a global “color-line” defining hierarchies, alliances, and divisions of labor.⁶⁴

Dissertation Structure

Chapter 1 traces cement’s biography in Palestine/Israel through its formative stage, the period of British rule, from 1918 to 1948. First, it examines Zionists’ continued attempts, rooted in the late Ottoman-period, to claim cement and concrete as materials of exclusive Jewish expertise. Then, it surveys cement’s political economy, shaped by the interplay between British interests, the Mandate’s legal structures, the Jewish-owned Nesher Portland Cement Company, and the initiatives of Palestinian capitalists. Analyzing the latter in the context of a broader Palestinian discourse about construction, the chapter demonstrates the crucial role accorded by Palestinians to building as part of a national and anti-colonial project. The repeated unraveling of such materialist nation-building endeavors, meanwhile, was the product of the very real vicissitudes of Palestinian

⁶⁴ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). The color line, even in its global manifestations, is often discussed exclusively as a “Western” construct, dividing the world between “white” and “non-white” populations. This is also, for the most part, the context in which I discuss it in the dissertation. However, it is important to note that race had local Middle Eastern and North African histories as well, and that the region had its share of “color lines,” often rooted in histories of enslavement. See: Heather J Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010); Eve M. Troutt Powell, *Tell This in My Memory Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Beeta Baghoolizadeh, “Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery: Media and The Construction Of Blackness In Iran, 1830-1960” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2018).

history, the abstractions of British racial thought and ideas about corporate personhood, and Palestine's underlying geological substrata. Finally, the chapter discusses the transformation of cement from a material imbued with future promise to a "mournful commodity" – one which embodied the civilian crises of World War II in Palestine and the years immediately following.

In a similar vein to the first chapter, Chapter 2 centers on the history of a specific building material and its production during the Mandate period. The chapter exchanges stone for cement, quarries for cement factories, and a focus on work processes and the body for political economy. It begins by following a photographic controversy that stirred Palestine in Summer 1931, as the images at its center blurred the lines between two different kinds of machines – quarry drills and machine guns. The chapter's second section then explores how British racial thought, Palestinian anti-racist critiques, and labor Zionism's shifting stance towards colonial divisions of labor came to frame competition over employment during the construction of the Haifa harbor and work in its Athlit quarry, between 1928-1931. The third and fourth sections examine the evolution of the Zionist "conquest of stone," from the early 1920s to the 1940s. They demonstrate how Zionist fantasies about reviving an immediate connection between Jewish bodies and the physical land of *Eretz Yisrael* (the Hebrew name for Palestine) depended first on the adoption of Palestinian knowledge, skills, and sensibilities, and then on the wide scale use of machinery to displace and replace Palestinian workers. The chapter concludes with a brief study of a critique of mechanization published in 1935 in the Palestinian economic

journal, *al-'Iqtisadiyyat al-'Arabiyya*, which offers an almost diametrically opposite approach to the one eventually embraced by Zionism's conquest of stone.

Chapter 3 moves away from the sites of production and into the rooms in which Histadrut officials and the Yishuv's leadership debated and planned the management of labor. The chapter traces Israel's post-1948 racial division to historical processes and ways of thinking which originated in the final decade of British rule. Accordingly, it is the sole chapter in the dissertation which focuses almost entirely on Zionist discourse and relies mostly on Zionist sources. The chapter opens with a 1942 Histadrut Executive meeting, in which some members expressed concern regarding the declining numbers of Jewish construction workers and the preponderance of exploitative employment of Palestinian Arabs by Histadrut-owned companies, while others brushed such concerns aside, citing "survival" over moral obligations and institutional strength over ideals. These discussions framed Histadrut-owned companies' increasing reliance on cheaper Arab labor in relation to distinctly racialized notions of colonial exploitation and "coolie" labor. At the same time, they also suggested a shift in the sense of the Yishuv's coercive potential to affect such labor regimes, on the one hand, and in the political calculations which informed the Zionist leadership's attitudes towards them.

The second half of Chapter 3 examines the work of the politicians, administrators, and academics, which the Yishuv's Emergency Committee (*Va'adat ha-Matzav*) charged with planning a Ministry of Labor for a future Jewish state following UNSCOP's September 1947 recommendation to partition Palestine. Specifically, I focus on the discussions and the plans various experts proposed for managing what they referred to as

the “Arab labor problem,” in the future state. These were plans for a state that never came to be: a Jewish state with a population which was roughly forty-five percent Palestinian, and which was bound by UNSCOP’s proposal to instituting open borders with the new Arab state which was planned to be set up alongside it. The war of 1947-1949 and the Palestinian Nakba nullified partition and decimated the Palestinian population in the eventual Israeli state. However, planners’ approaches to solving the theoretical “problem,” shed considerable light both on these appointed experts’ perceptions of the place of Palestinians in a Jewish state and economy, and on the measures of labor control and coercion which were eventually adopted by the Israeli state.

Chapter 4 returns to the sites covered in the second chapter, Palestine’s – and now Israel’s – stone quarries, in the aftermath of the Nakba and Israeli independence. The chapter shows how the alignment between Palestine’s geological substrata, Zionist patterns of settlement and colonization, and Palestinian strategies of struggle and survival rendered many stone quarries stubbornly Palestinian, even after the catastrophic events of the Nakba. Quarries stood at the center of several of the period’s most crucial junctures: from Palestinian citizens’ struggles against land confiscations and the state-directed policies of spatial “Judaization,” to the discriminatory incorporation of recent Mizrahi immigrants into the workforce, often as part of the same Judaization policies and explicitly at the expense of Palestinians. The chapter focuses on the tumultuous history of the stone quarries of the Shaghur valley (known in Hebrew as Beit ha-Kerem valley) in the Western Galilee between 1948 and 1964, while also drawing upon reports and events recorded in other quarries. During these years, I argue, stone quarries emerged as

political, social, and economic flashpoints between the state and its military administration, business interests, and the country's most marginalized populations. At the same time, quarries became bastions of Palestinian and Mizrahi self-sufficiency and the backdrop for reimagining self-perception, community, and culture.

The dissertation's final chapter explores the experiences of Palestinian citizens in Israel's construction industry in the twenty-five years following 1948. The chapter relies primarily on the narratives of thirteen Palestinian individuals who were construction workers, foremen, contractors, organizers, and activists, as well as their family members, all of whom I interviewed in October 2018. Since the chapter is methodologically different to the other chapters in the dissertation, its first section is dedicated in part to a methodological and practical discussion of how I approached conducting and analyzing these interviews. The chapter then combines my interlocutors' oral history narratives with archival and secondary sources to examine four facets of their experiences in Israel's construction industry: 1) the conditions and considerations which drove Palestinian citizens, many of them teens, to effectively become migrant workers in the Israeli job market, and specifically in the construction industry; 2) workers' attempts and experiences of creating spaces of safety and intimacy away from home with their peers and, at times, even with Jewish employers; 3) the pressures workers felt to conceal themselves in Jewish spaces because of their racialized hyper-visibility, on the one hand, and their experiences of the conditions of social invisibility which made their exploitation possible, on the other; and 4) how workers, their families, and their communities made use of the knowledge, skills, and material resources they gained in an industry into which

many of them were driven out of necessity, to rebuild and reimagine their own communities and to resist the state's social and physical stranglehold on their development.

CHAPTER 1: BUILDING TO SURVIVE

“These people are really committing suicide . . . why [they] deprive us and themselves of cement baffles me.”

– Emile Boutagy, February 26, 1941

“[I]f the subject of this letter (the vexed question of cement) does not come within your schedule, would you pass it on, with my apologies, to the officer who deals with the affairs of this mournful commodity.”

– Ivan Lloyd-Phillips, December 14, 1946

“Oh cement, oh beloved/you are always on my mind”

– Islam Ayoub, “The Cement Song (Longing, Oh, Beloved),”

Gaza, 2014

Portland cement, a hydraulic cement first patented in England in the early nineteenth century produced by fusing limestone and aluminosilicates, has played a crucial role in the history of Israel/Palestine for almost a century. From the first sacks unloaded in Jaffa in the 1890s to those clandestinely transported into the besieged Gaza Strip through tunnels from the Egyptian border area since 2007, cement has stood at the center of two of the defining experiences of Palestinian society: modernity writ-large and the encounter with Zionism.⁶⁵ Cement, and concrete for which it is a key constituent, have had far-

⁶⁵ “Concrete in Palestine,” *Cement Age* 10, no. 5 (May 1910): 371; Jon Donnison, “Gaza Tunnel Trade Squeezed by Egypt ‘Crackdown’,” *BBC News*, August 21, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19320135> [accessed: July 7, 2020]. For simplicity’s sake, I refer to Portland cement – by which I mean the form of “modern Portland cement” produced beginning in the late nineteenth century, and which remains the most widely used form of cement used today – as “cement” throughout. In this context, it is

reaching impact on infrastructure, the built environment, and the building professions globally.⁶⁶ However, cement, in presence and absence, has also intertwined in unique ways with Palestinians' everyday lives and political horizons: Its abundance has defined the changing landscapes of Palestinian towns and, after 1948, refugee camps; its scarcity – the product of Israeli restrictions – has caused contemporary Gaza's constant state of disrepair; its malleability has shaped the experiences of Palestinian construction workers in Israel and the settlements; and its solidity has wrought the separation wall.⁶⁷

This chapter focuses on the period of British rule (1918–48), which I argue was the formative stage of cement's biography in Palestine/Israel.⁶⁸ During this period construction was a central component in both the Zionist and the Palestinian nation-building projects. In the process, the consumption and production of cement became

important to note that even among Portland cements there have historically been variations. Modern Portland cement differed from earlier iterations in the degree of scientific experimentation and exactness in methods and standards of production, and in the adoption of rotary kilns to produce the cement. Earlier forms of Portland cement, which researchers have referred to as "proto-Portland" and "meso-Portland" cements, already greatly outperformed earlier and contemporary cements in terms of their strength. See: Edwin A.R. Trout, "The History of Calcerous Cements," in *Lea's Chemistry of Cement and Concrete*, ed. Peter C. Hewlett and Martin Liska (Oxford: Elsevier, 2019), 1–29.

⁶⁶ See: Amy E. Slaton, *Reinforced Concrete and the Modernization of American Building, 1900–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001); Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Rudolf Mrázek, *A Certain Age: Colonial Jakarta through the Memories of Its Intellectuals* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010); Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012); Diana Jean Sandoval Martinez, "Concrete Colonialism: Architecture, Infrastructure, Urbanism and the American Colonization of the Philippines" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2017).

⁶⁷ See: Weizman, *Hollow Land*; Yosef Jabareen and Hakam Dbiat, *Adrikhalut ve-Orientalizm ba-Aretz* [Architecture and Orientalism in the Country] (Haifa: ha-Merkaz le-Heker ha-'Ir ve-ha-Ezor, 2014), especially Chapter 6; Abourahme, "Assembling and Spilling-Over"; Kali Rubaii, "Concrete and Livability in Occupied Palestine," *Engagement*, September 20, 2016, <http://aesengagement.wordpress.com/2016/09/20/concrete-and-livability-in-occupied-palestine/> [accessed: July 7, 2020].

⁶⁸ See Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 17, 34–36; Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Appadurai, ed., *Social Life of Things*, 64–91.

indexical of the ability to construct not only modern built structures but also communities. While tracing cement consumption became one method of quantifying “the movement of construction” (Arabic: *harakat al-bina*’; Hebrew: *tnu ‘at ha-binyan*), its production was understood as crucial to the prospect of economic independence and liberation from colonial domination.⁶⁹

As part of the broader narrative of this dissertation, which posits construction and construction work as central pillars of the structures of inequality and domination in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel, the chapter illuminates cement’s role in the formation of these structures and in the strategies of struggle and survival Palestinians would deploy in their shadows. The first two sections follow the failed attempts to make cement and concrete an exclusive object of Hebrew labor through specialization and expertise, which coalesced with British racial ideologies and foreshadow the central role Palestinian men would eventually come to play in constructing the Jewish state.⁷⁰ The subsequent sections examine the formation of the Nesher cement company’s monopoly over cement production, abetted by British support, and the thwarted attempts of Palestinian capitalists to establish an Arab cement company during the Mandate. These developments set the stage for Nesher’s ability to maintain its monopoly, largely unabated, well beyond 1948. The struggle over cement production also presents new questions regarding the history of corporations and race in Mandate Palestine. The chapter’s final section binds together

⁶⁹ Yehoshua Ziman, *Binyan ha-Aretz, 1882–1945* [Building the Land, 1882–1945] (Jerusalem: Defus R. H. Cohen, 1946), 87.

⁷⁰ This reversal is even more remarkable when one considers that “wet jobs,” work in cement and concrete, would become those most identified with Palestinian laborers in the Israeli construction industry. Leila Farsakh, *Palestinian Labor Migration to Israel: Labor, Land, and Occupation* (London: Routledge, 2005), 108–9, 114–15, 146–47, 170–71.

these layers. The accumulation of cement's various significances meant that in times of scarcity, such as during World War II and in its aftermath, cement emerged as an object eliciting intense emotion, intimately connected to life itself and to the possibility of survival.

“It Has No Other Experts”

As Or Alexandrovich has shown, Early Zionist efforts to transition from the “traditional” construction materials of Palestine, such as gravel and limestone, to “modern” materials, in particular cement and cement bricks, were an essentially political transition linked directly to the idea of Hebrew labor.⁷¹ Focusing on the construction of the first “modern” Hebrew neighborhood, Ahuzat Bayt, just north of Jaffa in 1909, Alexandrovich describes an emerging consensus in Zionist circles whereby Palestinian construction workers were considered more skillful, indeed “naturally inclined,” toward construction in local materials and methods. They were imagined as having known the local stone “for generation upon generation,” making them “greatly preferable” to Jewish laborers.⁷² Zionist contractors and entrepreneurs viewed the construction of Ahuzat Bayt as an opportunity to introduce a new set of building materials and methods to unsettle this hierarchy of expertise. The material chosen to foster this shift by the neighborhood's

⁷¹ Alexandrovich, “Kurkar, Melet.” As noted in the introduction, in early twentieth-century Labor Zionism, “Hebrew labor” was considered a crucial component in the creation of a “new Jew,” which was able-bodied, masculine, and antithetical to the frail “diaspora Jew.” It also had a more concrete economic role. Zionist institutions pushed for the exclusive employment of Jews by Jewish employers, to create a separate, independent Jewish economy. See: Gluzman, *ha-Guf ha-Tziyoni*; Shapira, *ha-Ma'avak ha-Nikhzav*; Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*; Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*; Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries*.

⁷² Alexandrovich, “Kurkar, Melet,” 68–69. Alexandrovich quotes Arthur Ruppin, then director of the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization and a key operative of the Zionist movement.

contractor, Akivah Aryeh Weiss (1868-1947), and his business partner, David Arber (1861-1924), was the concrete brick (also referred to as a “cement brick”), to be made of imported Portland cement in Arber’s new factory.⁷³ Their goal was to ensure that Jewish hands would construct Jewish houses.⁷⁴

Weiss’s and Arber’s foray into replacing local stones and local workers was unsuccessful. In Or Alexandrovich’s telling, it was only after World War I, with the mass production of silicate (sand lime) bricks starting in 1922, that a serious contender to stone and masonry emerged.⁷⁵ However, the underlying logic of Weiss’ initiative – the suggested affinities among specific kinds of labor, materials, and race – continued to resonate strongly in Zionist circles. As the use of cement and concrete proliferated, the materials themselves were incorporated into competing visions of the land’s future. Like Hebrew labor and “building the land,” cement and concrete held a unique place in idealized visions of building. This is perhaps most famously captured in Nathan Alterman’s “Morning Song” (1932), where dressing the land “in a gown of concrete and cement” becomes central to performing the love of the land.⁷⁶

In this climate, the idea that Jewish laborers were more adept at work in modern materials, particularly concrete and cement, took on additional weight. British racialized conceptions of the different capacities of Jews and Palestinian Arabs further bolstered

⁷³ Alexandrovich, “Kurkar, Melet,” 76–77.

⁷⁴ This goal went well beyond the need to supply Jewish workers with employment and the economic goals generally identified with “Hebrew labor.” Weiss employed a discourse of sanctity and impurity regarding builders’ bodies and touch in the construction process. In his memoirs he describes his home, built solely by “Hebrew hands,” and “untouched by a foreign finger” as being “constructed wholly sacred.”

Alexandrovich, “Kurkar, Melet,” 77–79.

⁷⁵ Alexandrovich, “Kurkar, Melet,” 83–85.

⁷⁶ Eric Zakim, *To Build and Be Built: Landscape, Literature, and the Construction of Zionist Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 169–175.

this line of thought. In 1929, the British high commissioner John Chancellor weighed in on the increasingly contested matter of the unequal division of labor in Palestine, arguing that “the rivalry between the Jews and Arabs [in the matter of the division of labor and wage inequality],” was “mitigated by the fact that the two races tend to become naturally segregated in different kinds of labor.”⁷⁷ Juxtaposing the “superior physique” of Arabs to the “greater intelligence” of Jews, he used concrete work, among other things, as a case in point for this contradiction-riddled racial ideology, stating that

By reason of their greater intelligence and manual skill the Jews are economically superior to the Arabs in some of the more modern forms of skilled and semi-skilled work, such as *reinforced concrete*, care of machinery and electrical work [emphasis mine].

Champions of Hebrew labor seized upon these distinctions, effectively mirroring earlier frustrations with the inadequacy and disadvantages of Jewish hands working in local Palestinian stone. In place of the Palestinians’ “natural” or “traditional” affinity, Jewish labor offered expertise and specialization. The right-wing newspaper *Do’ar ha-Yom* reported with unconcealed glee that, following the devastation of the 1927 earthquake, Arab employers increasingly saw Hebrew construction, particularly in concrete, as more durable. As a result, the paper stated, Arab contractors in the Jerusalem area increasingly employed Jewish laborers. Prior to the earthquake “a small number of [Jewish] professionals in concrete work had worked . . . for Arab employers.” Now, it was in

⁷⁷ The National Archives (United Kingdom) (TNA): Colonial Office (CO) 733 (Colonial Office: Palestine Original Correspondence from 1919-1965)/165/2, 91.

concrete work in particular, “which among the Arabs has no specialists,” that Arab contractors in and around Jerusalem sought to employ Jews.⁷⁸

Opportunities to celebrate Jewish dominance of concrete work were found even when bemoaning the hardships of the Hebrew labor struggle. In March 1929, the newspaper *Davar*, identified with mainstream labor Zionism, complained that due to Arab laborers’ low salaries, Jewish workers were entirely blocked from the Jerusalem Electric Company’s works. The article took some solace however in “a small concrete work [as part of the electric company’s projects] that employs several Jews, since it has no other experts.”⁷⁹

Jewish mastery of cement was frequently juxtaposed with Arab failures to do so. In 1931, *Davar* complained that the Jerusalem municipality hired an Arab contractor to build the city’s new refuse incinerator and slaughterhouse. The contractor was “of course employing only Arab laborers in all simple labors.” However, *Davar* remarked, his attempt to boycott Hebrew labor “in the professional work as well” proved unsuccessful: the quality of the incinerator’s walls, “cast” – indicating they were made of concrete – initially by Arab laborers, was so poor, that Jewish laborers were hired to rebuild them.⁸⁰

A striking example of this trope is found in a book dedicated by the Construction Workers Union to one of the Jewish construction industry’s pioneers, Chaim Flexer (1902-1979), celebrating his seventieth birthday. In an undated speech before the Construction Workers Association in Jerusalem, Flexer reminisces of his days working in

⁷⁸ “‘Avoda ‘Ivrit Etzel ‘Aravim,” *Do’ar ha-Yom*, August 28, 1927.

⁷⁹ “‘Herem ‘al ‘Avoda ‘Ivrit,” *Davar*, March 18, 1929.

⁸⁰ “Binyan Beit ha-Mitbahayyim,” *Davar*, November 18, 1931.

the city, first in stone masonry, then in concrete: “As I passed the Shaykh Jarrah neighborhood, I was reminded of the Mufti – Hajj Amin al-Husayni (1895-1974) – who invited Jewish laborers in 1934 to fix the concrete ceiling that had collapsed in his office, immediately after it was cast by Arab laborers.”⁸¹

The crux of Flexer’s recollection, apocryphal though it may be, is clear: that a nationalist figure of al-Husayni’s standing invited Jewish laborers to fix the shoddy workmanship of his compatriots is ultimate testimony to what the discourse of Jewish expertise rendered an almost “natural” Jewish superiority in cement and concrete work and beyond. Flexer’s memory may have already been tinged by the widespread association in Jewish Israeli culture between “Arab labor” and poor work, but it might also point us toward some of its origins.⁸² This neat narrative of exclusive Jewish expertise in cement and concrete and the corresponding depiction of Palestinian construction as always falling apart, fell apart readily itself. Throughout the Mandate period, Palestinian contractors and laborers carried out projects, large and small, that made extensive use of concrete and cement.⁸³

⁸¹ Eliyahu Biletzki, ed., *Haim Flexer* (Tel Aviv: Hotza’at Histadrut Po‘alei ha-Binyan, 1972), 124.

⁸² I thank an anonymous reviewer for calling my attention to the similarities between Flexer’s story about the collapsed roof in al-Husayni’s house and the contrasting narratives about the collapse of the roof of the Neve Tzedek Girls’ School in 1908. The 1908 incident, which Or Alexandrovich also recounts, placed the school building’s contractor, Jaffa-native Yosef Eliyahu Chelouche, opposite an inquiry committee formed to investigate the collapse. The committee found that the collapse was a result of what they described as the negligence of Chelouche’s Palestinian Arab builders. Chelouche himself – who understood the committee as exonerating him entirely – placed the blame on the inexperienced Jewish carpenters he was forced to hire. Here too, then, structural integrity and questions of builders’ skill were politicized and racialized. It is also possible to see Flexer’s recollections as a retort of sorts to Chelouche’s: an assertion of the advances made by “Hebrew labor” in the two and a half decades which separate the narratives. Yosef Eliyahu Chelouche, *Parashat Hayai* [Reminiscences of My Life] (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2005 [1931]), 117. Cited in Alexandrovich, “Kurkar, Melet,” 66–68.

⁸³ The multiple files of the Palestinian contracting firm Aboussouan and Nassar in the Israel State Archives are full of examples of such projects. See also: Mahmoud Yazbak and Yfaat Weiss, “A Tale of Two

The idea that Portland cement and its products could restructure the building trade was not unique to Palestine: from the early nineteenth century, part of what made these materials appealing to capitalist and socialist visionaries alike was their potential to do just that. In both Europe and the United States, construction in concrete was supposed to facilitate a redistribution of skill within the building trades. However, rather than fostering a new class of expert laborers, it was perceived as circumventing established building crafts, permitting cheaper, “unskilled” labor to engage in the manual work of construction, while emphasizing the skills of engineers and other technical experts.⁸⁴

From the perspective of labor, Hebrew or otherwise, the introduction of cement and concrete as materials of expertise was fraught to begin with. Working in a “deskilling” material, most Jewish construction workers seem to have had very little actual advantage over their Palestinian peers. At the same time, despite the capacity of Palestinian contractors and workers to incorporate the new materials into their repertoire, the introduction of cement and concrete on a large scale had considerable adverse impact on Palestine’s established building crafts. As early as 1930, the Hope-Simpson report noted that Palestinian stonemasons and stone dressers were severely hurt by the expanding use of “cement, reinforced concrete and silicate brick, all manufactured by Jews.”⁸⁵

Houses,” in *Haifa Before and After 1948: Narratives of a Mixed City*, eds. Mahmoud Yazbak and Yfaat Weiss (Dordrecht: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing, 2011), 11–42; Waleed Karkabi and Adi Roitenberg, “Arab-Jewish Architectural Partnership in Haifa During the Mandate Period: Qaraman and Gerstel Meet on the ‘Seam Line’,” in *Haifa Before and After 1948*, 43–68.

⁸⁴ Forty, *Concrete and Culture*, Chapter 8; Slaton, *Reinforced Concrete*.

⁸⁵ Hope-Simpson, *Palestine: Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development* (London: HMSO, 1930), 133. The eventual near extinction of the *mu‘allim al-bina’*, the Palestinian master-builder, whose

Cement transformed construction work in Palestine, but not in the ways the Hebrew press or Zionist entrepreneurs imagined. Its wide-scale introduction succeeded in weakening the standing of Palestinian craftbuilders. That in itself could not guarantee Zionist dominance in construction. Labor, however, was not the only area in which the ability to construct in Palestine was contested.

Attention to Zionist preoccupations with material acts of building as part of a nation-building project, studied from perspectives as diverse as literature, political philosophy, and architecture, may have occluded the importance Palestinian anticolonial projects conferred upon construction, evident already during the Mandate.⁸⁶ In the press, in their interactions with the British, and in business correspondence, Palestinians articulated visions of national futures bound together by cement. These visions came up against a considerably more substantial obstacle than Zionist claims for labor specialization, however, one shaped in no small part by British policy: the Jewish monopoly over cement production.

Empire's Monopoly

The Nesher Portland Cement Company, founded in 1923 by the Russian-born industrialist and entrepreneur Michael Pollak, maintained throughout the Mandate and

specter haunts the stone houses of 'Ayn Hud/Ein Hod in Susan Slyomovics' work can perhaps also be traced to this process: Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory*.

⁸⁶ Zakim, *To Build and Be Built*; Eyal Chowers, *The Political Philosophy of Zionism: Trading Jewish Words for a Hebraic Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chapter 3; Allweil, *Homeland*.

beyond a monopoly over cement production.⁸⁷ The Nesher factory's establishment was the realization of plans laid by a group named the Palestine Portland Cement Syndicate. By the time Michael Pollak became involved, the syndicate, led by several prominent British Jews, had already selected land near the town of Yajur, southeast of Haifa, for the factory and its quarries. Once conditions of the land's purchase were agreed upon, Pollak registered the new "Portland Cement Company 'Nesher,' Ltd." in London, so a viable legal entity could make the purchase. London remained the center of Nesher's financial operations until Pollak sold his stake in the company and its London holdings were liquidated in 1945.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ The company's ability to secure protective tariffs on imported cement and duty-free import of raw materials for exporting industries has served, alongside the granting of the consignments of the Dead Sea potash works and the Electric Company to Jewish entrepreneurs, as evidence for British intervention favoring Jewish industry. See Smith, *The Roots of Separatism*, 166–71; Seikaly, *Haifa*, 86–88. For the history of the electric company, see: Ronen Shamir, *Current Flow: The Electrification of Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); and Meiton, *Electrical Palestine*. For the Dead Sea potash works (PPL), see Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress*, especially Chapters 1 and 4. More recent engagements with Mandate Palestine's economic and development history also touch upon Nesher, attesting to its centrality as an industrial and economic endeavor. See, for example: Seikaly, *Men of Capital*; Norris, *Land of Progress*. Nesher as a "mixed" employer (of both Arabs and Jews) and a site of workers' struggles, which occasionally brought together Arab and Jewish workers, has drawn considerable attention from labor historians of Palestine. See: Deborah Bernstein, "Yehudim ve- 'Aravim be-Mif'al 'Nesher'" [Jews and Arabs in the Nesher Factory], *Cathedra* 76 (1995): 82–102; David De Vries, "Ma'avakei 'Avoda u-Samkhut be-Kerev Po'alei ha-Ta'asiya be-Eretz Yisrael: Po'alei Beit ha-Haroshet 'Nesher' be-Shnot ha-'Esrin" [Struggles of Labor and Authority among Industry Workers in Eretz Yisrael: The Workers of the Nesher Factory in the Twenties], *Yahadut Zmanenu* 8 (1993): 177–215; Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 85–88, 207–10.

⁸⁸ Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, *ha-Melet ve-Yotzrav*, 19–23, 66. Nesher's contemporary publications in Hebrew and English attempt to trace the company's establishment directly to visions of Theodor Herzl, the Zionist ideologue often described as the "visionary of the State" (*hoze ha-medina*). Both Nesher's Hebrew and English webpages cite a passage supposedly taken from Herzl's highly influential 1902 utopian novel, *Altneuland* (*Old New Land*). The passage cited, "[t]he plan for building a homeland for the Jewish people must take into consideration the founding of a Hebrew cement factory as well," is, however, nowhere to be found in the novel. Even its prescriptive tone is at odds with the narratorial voice of the novel. Herzl does make positive mention of plans to establish a cement factory in Haifa in the novel (alongside a new kind of brick kiln), as one among many components of a narrative of general industrial progress and prosperity told by the character of Joe Levy, the general director of the Department of Industry. Levy's speech is heard by the novel's protagonists in the form of a phonograph recording intended for posterity, played back during a Passover Seder meal. The fabrication of this quote from Herzl is particularly curious given that other early

Nesher's increasing profits and the company's strengthening hold over Palestine's cement market, beginning in the late 1920s, coincided with a steady increase in the use of cement in the land. In 1922 and 1923, cement imports into Palestine – approximating consumption in the absence of local manufacture – totaled roughly thirty thousand tons annually. By 1929, consumption was estimated at nearly sixty-two thousand tons.⁸⁹

Although British ideologies of racial and civilizational hierarchy contributed to the Mandate administration's more favorable view of industrial endeavors led by European Jews than ones led by Palestinian Arabs, Nesher's ability to maintain its status as a monopoly seems also to have been rooted in its management's ability to navigate British local and imperial interests and discourses.⁹⁰ Pollak's efforts in the summer of 1925, immediately before beginning production, to institute duty-free admission for raw materials for exporting industries were instrumental to the company's success. Here, the reasoning Pollak provided was entirely local: without concessions, the company risked

twentieth-century Zionist ideologues such as Arthur Ruppin and the industrialist Nahum Wilbushevitz did in fact offer such prescriptive visions. "Introduction," Nesher Israel Cement Enterprises, n.d., <http://www.nesher.co.il/en/history-nesher/> [accessed: June 17, 2020]; Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land* (*Altneuland*), trans. Lotta Levensohn (New York: Markus Weiner Publishing and the Herzl Press, 1987 [1941]) 217–18; "To Manufacture Cement in Palestine," *American Jewish Chronicle* 2, no. 4 (December 1, 1916): 127.

⁸⁹ B. S. Binah, *Industrial Palestine: A Survey of Recent Undertakings and Future Possibilities* (London: W. Speaight & Sons, 1924), 28; Department of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1943* (Jerusalem: Government of Palestine, 1944), Table 135. It is highly likely that British building policies and preferences also contributed to the increased consumption of cement already during the first decade of the Mandate. However, the most prominent example of British construction policies' impact during this period, Ronald Storrs' Jerusalem stone – or white stone – regulation, meant that at least in the vicinity of Jerusalem's Old City, a wide-scale transition towards cement and concrete was effectively prohibited. The regulation, which mandated the use of local limestone in all new construction in the area, also engendered prohibitive costs, considerably restricting who could and could not build new structures or renovate existing ones. See: Roberto Mazza, "'The Preservation and Safeguarding'; Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 28–37.

⁹⁰ Norris relates this British tendency to a conception of Jews as ideal "colonial middle men," while Smith attributes it to British concepts of Jewish settlers as Europeans who were thus more "civilized" and "modern" than the Arab "natives." Both explanations, despite different emphases, boil down to British racial and civilizational hierarchies. See: Norris, *Land of Progress*, 75–91; Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, 7, 53.

collapse, resulting in loss of jobs.⁹¹ However, earlier that year, Pollak had attempted to convince the British to raise the tariff on imported cement to protect Nesher's product using a more "imperial" argument. Unlike imported European cement, Pollak contended, Nesher's production would rely solely on British coal, thus contributing to the Metropole. When authorities formed a committee to discuss the tariff on cement in May 1926, Pollak again justified protection not only because the firm employed "250 Jewish workers and 100 Arab workers," but also because it provided a living for "about 200 English workers in coal mining and transport. [And] England is now in dire need of exporting coal."⁹²

The decision to employ Palestinians in the company's quarry, despite the protests of the advocates of Hebrew labor, which Chapter 2 discusses in detail, was in line both with economic considerations, given the wage discrimination between Arabs and Jews, and with the ongoing prevalence of ideas regarding the suitability of certain bodies for certain forms of labor and materials. Yet Pollak's outward reasoning also brought together political expediency and economy, demonstrating attention to British and regional sensitivities and to the struggle over cement's identity. The employment of Arabs, he argued, was intended to prevent accusations by consumers in Palestine and beyond that Nesher's cement was "Jewish." Furthermore, a company registered in England should rightly employ both peoples.⁹³ Whether or not Pollak's reasoning was genuine, Norris notes that for the British, the makeup of Nesher's workforce was a

⁹¹ Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, 166–68.

⁹² Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, *ha-Melet*, 53, 67.

⁹³ See: Bernstein, "Yehudim ve- 'Aravim," 94; Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, *ha-Melet*, 65; Y. Marminsky, "Report of My Actions at Nesher," September 17, 1929, Lavon Institute Labor Movement Archive (LMA), IV-208-1-258A,

decisive factor in directing the Haifa harbor's construction – the largest construction project in Palestine until that point – to utilize Nesher's cement.⁹⁴

Cement: To End Colonial Domination

Despite the profound differences between a settler movement and an indigenous one, the objective of “building the land” in a material sense and as part of a national project – for so long perceived as a uniquely Zionist project and concern – was also shared by Palestinians. Palestinian capitalists, builders, and others took note of cement's growing popularity. By the late 1920s, they began to see the material not only as an economic opportunity, but potentially an important factor in economic and national emancipation. Discussions about Palestinian access to cement, the prospects of “Arab cement,” and Nesher's stranglehold over the local market emerged alongside increased attention to the act of building itself. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Palestinian press frequently covered the “movement of construction” (*ḥarakat al-bina*) in various Palestinian cities, reported on the changing costs of construction materials and labor, featured articles about construction methods and the economics of construction, and closely followed governmental building schemes, the availability of housing, and the granting of building permits.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Norris, *Land of Progress*, 121–22.

⁹⁵ See, for example: *Mir'at al-Sharq*, June 4, 1930; *al-Difa'*, November 5, 1935; *al-'Iqtisadiyyat al-'Arabiyya* 3, no. 1 & 2 (January 20, 1937): 22; *Filastin*, April 29, 1937; *al-Wahda*, January 26, 1946; *al-Ghadd*, June 7, 1946; *Filastin*, January 16, 1947. Two articles published in *Mir'at al-Sharq* in April and May 1933 described a housing bubble in Jerusalem, scorning Jerusalem's Palestinian capitalists for ignoring “true economic principles” (*qawa'id iqtisadiyya ṣaḥiḥa*) and misinterpreting the impact of the unfolding global financial crisis. According to the author, in their zeal to construct housing, perceived as a

The records and correspondence of Palestine's Chambers of Commerce and the contemporary Arabic press prove key sources for unearthing Palestinian visions of national futures. These sources further reveal the centrality of construction, and in particular of cement – a material which became identified with modernity and national liberation – to these visions. The chambers, as an increasingly important hub for the activities of Palestine's "men of capital,"⁹⁶ were often closely involved in initiatives to introduce "Arab cement" into the Palestinian market, either through regional cooperation or through local manufacture.

The press, meanwhile, served as a platform for highlighting cement's centrality, benefits, and emancipatory potential. Newspapers also placed Nesher at the center of their critiques of British protection of Jewish industry and sought to encourage alternatives. Opposition to the government's preferential treatment of Nesher seems to have emerged forcefully toward the end of 1929. Nesher's success after initial difficulties, the sharpening contours of conflict in the wake of the violent clashes of summer 1929, and the British decision (succumbing to Nesher's pressures) to raise the tariff on imported cement to 850 mils per ton all likely played a role in the timing. Furthermore, the establishment of the Syrian National Cement Manufacturing Company in Damascus in early 1930 meant that there was now a self-styled Arab national

"safe" investment in tumultuous times, Palestinian capitalists transformed the city: "Ten years ago [one] searched by lamp and wick for a house," in Jerusalem; now "you find hundreds of houses . . . [but] no one to rent them." It was the responsibility of these capitalists to amend this situation by ceasing to build housing recklessly and adopting proper economic reason. *Mir'at al-Sharq*, April 29, 1933; *Mir'at al-Sharq*, May 3, 1933.

⁹⁶ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*.

alternative to Nesher, and the Syrian company's founders specifically courted Palestinian investors through the press.⁹⁷

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the emphasis on cement and concrete as decidedly “scientific” materials at the time, one of the earliest written responses to this call for Palestinian investors was a two-part article describing the benefits of cement “from the chemical perspective.”⁹⁸ Its author, Majdi al-Shawa (1899-1979), a Gazan doctor of chemistry, specifically stated his objective was not to comment on whether Palestinians should invest in the Damascene firm, since “all were convinced of the necessity of cooperating in and assisting the national economy.” Rather, he provided readers with a history of cement's evolution, Portland cement's invention, the differences between natural and industrial cements, and between non-hydraulic and hydraulic cements. The article's second installment discussed the benefits of cement in the face of structural threats, focusing on earthquakes and drawing on examples from concrete construction in Japan – no doubt a pertinent focus given the disastrous impact of the 1927 earthquake still fresh in the local memory. Despite his initial claim not to opine on investing in the Syrian factory, al-Shawa concluded this second part by clarifying that initiatives like the Arab cement factory were crucial for the Arab lands' economic independence, and that its founders sought no less than to end colonial domination.

⁹⁷ *Al-Yarmuk*, October 8, 1929; *Mir'at al-Sharq*, December 29, 1929; *Filastin*, February 23, 1930.

⁹⁸ *Filastin*, April 8–9, 1930. The centrality of the scientific approach is demonstrated by the sheer volume of reports on cement and concrete issued by the Technion's Building Materials Testing Laboratory and others. Central Zionist Archives (CZA) J15\4084. See also: Slaton, *Reinforced Concrete*; Forty, *Concrete and Culture*, especially Introduction, and Chapter 1.

Al-Shawa's writing stands out among other contemporary discussions of cement in its materials science approach. However, the tone of much of the discourse, particularly among those Palestinians calling for tariff reform and the end of preference for Jewish industry, was often framed as scientific in a different fashion: it was anchored in economic calculations. In December 1929, *Mir'at al-Sharq* estimated that the tariff on imported cement cost Palestine's government fifty-two thousand pounds a year, accounting for the customs lost on imports, the losses of shipping, and of portage income at the ports.⁹⁹ In February 1930, the prominent Palestinian accountant Fu'ad Saba (1902-1984) sent the acting chief secretary of the Mandate administration an evaluation of the government's cement tariff policy in light of Nesher's 1927 and 1928 financial reports. Saba concluded that given Nesher's already "very fair return" in 1928 there was no justification for the 1929 tariff increase. Saba's evaluation, of which his firm kept a copy in a folder titled "Government Neglect of Arab Industry" (*ihmal al-hukuma lil-shina'a al-'Arabiyya*), included calculations that demonstrated that Nesher's "heavy protection" was not economically viable, but rather part of a pattern of neglect and preference, accorded to Arab and Jewish industries respectively.¹⁰⁰

The press continued to follow the progress of the Damascus factory, and to critique the tariff policy on cement during the period from 1930 to 1931.¹⁰¹ In one article, a "prominent" Haifa merchant told *Filastin* that the degree of Nesher's "tyranny" could

⁹⁹ *Mir'at al-Sharq*, December 29, 1929.

¹⁰⁰ "Re: Interview of Arab Executive on the subjects of Taxation and Protection," February 18, 1930, ISA-NonGovernment-ArabExecutiveCommit-000678h.

¹⁰¹ *Mir'at al-Sharq*, April 9, 1930; *Filastin*, July 30, 1930; *Filastin*, November 5, 1930; *Filastin*, December 3, 1930; *Filastin*, March 29, 1931; *al-Difa'*, September 9, 1931.

be revealed by posing different questions: instead of asking why European cement is so expensive in Palestine, the merchant suggested, one should ask how Nesher could sell its own cement in Syria at a lower price than in Palestine, despite additional transportation costs. The tariffs, in the merchant's view, encouraged precisely this sort of behavior, since they meant that Palestinian consumers had little alternative to Nesher. To combat this, he continued, the Arab Executive and the other national bodies should demand the government force Nesher to sell its produce in Palestine at the same prices as in Syria. Failing this, the alternative was simple – the same national bodies should call for the establishment of a national cement corporation. Supporters and investors were sure to approach immediately, since cement “was a necessary material, and the profit in it was without doubt.” He added, “Palestine's people have had their fill of meetings and statements, it is time for action.”¹⁰²

Perhaps here the idea of a Palestinian Arab national cement factory was born. By early 1935, reports appeared of Arab and Jewish initiatives to compete with Nesher. The coincidence of initiatives by “a group of people from Bayt Jala who had recently returned from America” to establish a cement factory in the Nablus area, and a Jewish entrepreneur who established a company named the Shimshon Cement Company in the ‘Artuf area west of Jerusalem, indicates that it was likely the economic boom of 1934–35 was motivating both.¹⁰³ The Bayt Jala initiative seems to have dissipated quickly.

¹⁰² *Filastin*, October 6, 1931. A similar claim regarding Nesher having “dumped” cement in Syria in the past, underselling local produce, was later raised in an appeal by the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce to the Department of Customs, Excise and Trade. “Imports of Cements,” December 6, 1940, ISA-NonGovernment-ArabCommrcChambJer-000zt5k.

¹⁰³ *Mir'at al-Sharq*, February 23, 1935; *Mir'at al-Sharq*, March 13, 1935; *al-Iqtisadiyyat al-'Arabiyya* 1, no. 7 (April 1935, 1): 25; *Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1943*, Table 135. *Al-Iqtisadiyyat al-'Arabiyya* identifies the rise in consumption as what motivated Nachum Menn (1894-1961) of the Shimshon initiative.

Shimshon would remain in a perpetual state of commencing operations “shortly” for two decades.¹⁰⁴

For Palestinian consumers, the 1936 general strike seems to have made appeals to products’ “Arabness” particularly attractive and concerns that products were secretly benefitting Jewish investors graver. Two articles from *al-Difa’* and an advertisement for Syrian cement, all published in January 1937, demonstrate this. The first *al-Difa’* article discusses the rising enthusiasm of Arab consumers for Arab goods and its impact on Nesher, whose sales were increasingly threatened by the Syrian National Cement factory in Damascus and the Chekka factory near Tripoli.¹⁰⁵ In the second article, the same Chekka factory responded to rumors that the company was owned by Jewish investors by affirming that Chekka was a pure (*ṣarifa*) Arab company, its cement made by Arab hands (*maṣnu’a bi-ayadi ‘Arabiyya*), and that among its five hundred workers and its shareholders “there is not a single Jew.” In an advertisement in *Filastin*, Chekka’s Damascene competitor used similar language, stating that the company’s cement was made “entirely by Arab hands” and of “good Arab soil,” and that all company shares were owned by Arabs. Ownership of capital, the laboring bodies involved in production, and the soil from which the cement was made all played a role in defining it as properly Arab.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ The factory faltered initially due to funding issues and questions potential investors posed as to the trustworthiness of its founder, Nachum Menn. Construction began multiple times, but production began only in 1955. In 1969, Nesher purchased Shimshon to become once again a production monopoly. *Correspondences and Reports regarding the Cement Industry in the Land, 1926-1938*, CZA S8\1062; and Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, *ha-Melet*, 175–79.

¹⁰⁵ *Al-Difa’*, January 21, 1937.

¹⁰⁶ *Al-Difa’*, January 25, 1937; *Filastin*, January 12, 1937. The advertisement in *Filastin* is discussed in Deborah Bernstein and Badi Hasisi, “‘Buy and Promote the National Cause’: Consumption, Class

Also in early 1937, the first Palestinian Arab initiative to gain considerable momentum toward establishing a cement factory took shape. This plan likely sought to capture some of the revolt's energy, but it was the revolt that would ultimately undo it.¹⁰⁷ A group of prominent Palestinian capitalists, including Ahmad Hilmi Pasha (1883-1963) of the Arab Bank and later the Arab National Bank, Hajj 'Abd al-Rahim al-Tamimi, Fakhri al-Nashashibi (1899-1941), Elias Gelat, and George Khader led the initiative. Having struck a partnership with the German MIAG firm, the new company began conducting scientific surveys of suitable sites in the Nablus, Jerusalem, and Haifa areas, eventually settling on a site near 'Artuf – where the Shimshon company had also planned its location. However, the arrest and exile of Ahmad Hilmi and others during the revolt put an end to the project, and all its documentation was lost when Fakhri al-Nashashibi was murdered in Iraq in 1941.¹⁰⁸

The Binds of War

The severe economic downturn in the latter part of the revolt seems to have stymied Palestinian initiatives, while the Histadrut took advantage of these circumstances to gain

Formation and Nationalism in Mandate Palestine Society,” *Nations and Nationalism* 14, no. 1 (2008): 142. While outside the scope of this dissertation, the question of what (capital, labor, land) renders a product “appropriately national” demands further inquiry. For examples of the relationship between business interests, consumption patterns, and nationalism in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East, see: Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Elizabeth B. Frierson, “Gender, Consumption and Patriotism: The Emergence of an Ottoman Public Sphere,” in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 99–125; Seikaly, *Men of Capital*.

¹⁰⁷ For several perspectives on the history of the strike and the revolt see: Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Yazbak, “From Poverty to Revolt”; Anderson, “From Petition to Confrontation”.

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Difa'*, April 28, 1937; *Filastin*, May 14, 1937, 3; “The Palestine Arab Cement Scheme,” December 4, 1946, ISA-NonGovernment-ArabCommrcChambJer-000zy91.

a foothold in Nesher's quarry. The quarry's Arab workers were pushed out completely in 1938 by David Hacoheh of Solel Boneh, the Histadrut's contracting firm, who two years prior had replaced Musbah Shaqifi – the contractor who operated the quarry since its establishment.¹⁰⁹ If British enthusiasm toward Nesher's product was, initially at least, due in part to its employment of both Jews and Arabs, the revolt and the eruption of World War II changed British calculations dramatically. As safe shipping routes became fewer and other regions in the empire consumed their local cement production entirely, the British became dependent on Nesher.

During World War II, Palestine was transformed into Britain's second-largest military base in the Middle East, generating unprecedented demand for materials, produce and goods.¹¹⁰ Palestine's manufacturing industry grew rapidly, mainly to satisfy British military demands, and unemployment was considerably reduced.¹¹¹ At the same time, severe inflation dramatically curtailed the purchasing power of Palestine's inhabitants. To combat this and to assure sufficient supplies for the military stationed in Palestine and beyond, authorities installed an austerity regime, with price control and rationing measures on manufactured goods and produce. This regime failed to prevent

¹⁰⁹ Shaqifi was notorious for his harsh treatment of his employees and the poor conditions he provided. This made the quarry the site of some of the most frequent and lengthy Arab workers' strikes during the Mandate period. See Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 207–10; and Bernstein, "Yehudim ve-'Aravim," 97–103.

¹¹⁰ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 2.

¹¹¹ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 28; Jacob Metzger, *The Divided Economy*, 9. This led to the emergence of what Sherene Seikaly has termed "the politics of basic needs." Seikaly's work on the war and its aftermath has focused on the elements of this new politics which related to food supply, agricultural produce, and emergent concepts such as the calorie and cost-of-living. See Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, Chapters 3 and 4.

scarcity, however – in goods from foodstuffs to building materials, and cement in particular.¹¹²

The war also spurred immense government construction, and Nesher became the exclusive source of cement for British military needs in Palestine. Between 1942 and 1943, it sold 80 percent of its cement to British forces, and throughout the war the government was required to approve all civilian purchases.¹¹³ Dependency spawned intense government cooperation and coordination with Nesher. This included instituting monthly coordination visits at the factory, setting production quotas, intervening on Nesher's behalf with suppliers of oil and coal in order to meet quotas, and having Nesher's representatives advise the general headquarters in Egypt.¹¹⁴ The war proved immensely profitable for Nesher, even though cement was throughout a controlled material, its price fixed and its civilian use prohibited, generating a severe housing shortage.¹¹⁵

Many Palestinians felt that Nesher, like other large Jewish-owned firms, was profiteering, granting preference to Jewish needs, and neglecting and exploiting

¹¹² Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, Chapters 3 and 4.

¹¹³ Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, *ha-Melet*, 97–98.

¹¹⁴ For some particularly interesting examples of these connections, see: *Controller of Heavy Industries (Formerly Director of Public Works) (Competent Authority) March 12, 1942–April 30, 1943*, Collection of David Ferentz: “Meeting on 11-3-1942 to arrange for the maximum possible output of cement from Portland Cement Co. Nesher Ltd.,” March 11, 1942; Director of Public Works to the Shell Company of Palestine, March 14, 1942; Portland Cement Co. Nesher to the Director of Public Works, March 15, 1942; Director of Public Works to the Portland Cement Co. ‘Nesher,’ March 20, 1942; Director of Public Works to Portland Cement Co. ‘Nesher,’ March 26, 1943.

¹¹⁵ *Al-Difa'*, December 30, 1942; Gead (Jad) M. Suidan to Chief Secretary, February 15, 1944, ISA-Mandatory Organizations-Secretary Commerce-000lqk3; Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, *ha-Melet*, 100; Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 131; Nachum T. Gross and Jacob Metzger, “Palestine in World War II: Some Economic Aspects,” in *The Sinews of War: Essays on the Economic History of World War II*, ed. Geoffrey T. Mills and Hugh Rockoff (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press), 74–76.

Palestine's Arab population.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the war had cut off Palestinians from neighboring countries, circumscribing the regional visions that animated earlier calls to turn to Syrian cement instead.¹¹⁷ Limited by British wartime control policies, the Arab Chambers of Commerce requested that the government either allocate some of Nesher's product for civilian needs, drastically reduce the tariff, or allow import from neighboring countries once again.

As the war in Europe ended, Nesher's workers embarked on a lengthy strike, protesting the prices they paid while the company profited. In November 1945, after several months of negotiations and deliberations, Pollak sold the company to the shared ownership of Solel Boneh, and a coalition of industrialists and contractors organized as the Central Palestine Company for Trade and Investment.¹¹⁸ The 50–50 split between the trade union's contracting firm and private capitalists was framed as an ideological decision.¹¹⁹ For Palestinians, it meant that what little claim Nesher ever had to having been a disinterested party was now completely gone. Under the joint ownership of Zionist workers and contractors, the newspaper *al-Sha'b* stated, the company had become entirely subservient to the conquest of labor and colonization.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 117–18, 170; *Cement – Various*, 10/1940-2/1944, ISA-NonGovernment-ArabCommrcChambJer-000zt5k.

¹¹⁷ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 118; Secretary of the Conference of the Arab Chambers of Commerce of Palestine to the Economic Advisor, November 28, 1938, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-MandatMisc-000y6tb.

¹¹⁸ Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, *ha-Melet*, 115–21.

¹¹⁹ Ben-Ner, Aviram, and Levi, 115-121.

¹²⁰ *Al-Sha'b*, December 19, 1946.

The war's end brought little economic respite. The housing shortage, which resulted in immense crowding and even plague, continued.¹²¹ The cement shortage itself, according to British sources, lasted until December 1947, when Nesher's production finally began catching up with post-war reconstruction.¹²² Throughout, and despite countless appeals, the government maintained the 850 mills tariff on imports.¹²³ The urgent need for construction, Nesher's inability to produce sufficient cement to satisfy demand, and the continued sense that the company and its agents were actively granting preference to Jewish needs, led to what became known in the Arabic press as the "cement crisis" (*azmat al-asmant*).¹²⁴

"It Is Impossible for a Company to Possess Race"

Out of this crisis emerged the Arab Cement Works (ACW). According to a memorandum by the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, the cement works grew out of two competing initiatives. The first was centered in Nablus and led by 'Abd al-Rahim al-Tamimi, who

¹²¹ *The Fight against the Plague, August 18, 1944 – April 3, 1946*, Haifa Municipal Archive 6050 00311/22. The fight waged in Haifa against the plague was also dependent on the ability to secure cement to seal openings in structures which could potentially house rats.

¹²² Acting Commissioner for Commerce and Industry to Chief Secretary, January 7, 1948, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000m8p3. As mentioned in Chapter Three, below, Alongside the cement shortage, the war's aftermath also witnessed a shortage in construction workers – particularly among the Jewish population. Furthermore, Nesher's ability to catch up with the construction needs of the land in December 1947, would prove to be only temporary. A second cement shortage beset the newly founded state of Israel in the following years.

¹²³ Acting Commissioner for Commerce and Industry to Chief Secretary, January 7, 1948, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000m8p3.

¹²⁴ *Filastin*, December 13, 1945; *al-Sha'b*, December 19, 1946; *al-Difa'*, January 23, 1947; Anis Nasr, Vice President of the Haifa Chamber of Commerce to Chief Secretary, 24 February 1947, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000m8p3. Several reports indicate in fact that the removal of the controls regime on September 15, 1946 had in fact lessened cement's availability dramatically, fostering additional profiteering. District Commissioner's Office, Gaza to Acting Chief Secretary Dalglish, December 14, 1946 ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000m8p3; *Filastin*, December 11, 1946; *al-Sha'b*, December 19, 1946.

had also been involved in the 1937 initiative. The other was headed by ‘Abd al-Hamid Shoman (1888-1974) of the Arab Bank. Realizing that “the Nablus scheme” was progressing rapidly, Shoman threw his support (but not his finances, the memorandum states) behind Tamimi’s initiative, and the ACW was incorporated in Palestine on June 22, 1945.¹²⁵ Even before official incorporation, *Filastin* had written of “peak enthusiasm” (*ḥamasa yablugh al-dhurwa*) among investors for the initiative, which received the support of both of Palestine’s Arab banks, and *al-Difa’* had reported that the project was garnering interest in Transjordan as well.¹²⁶

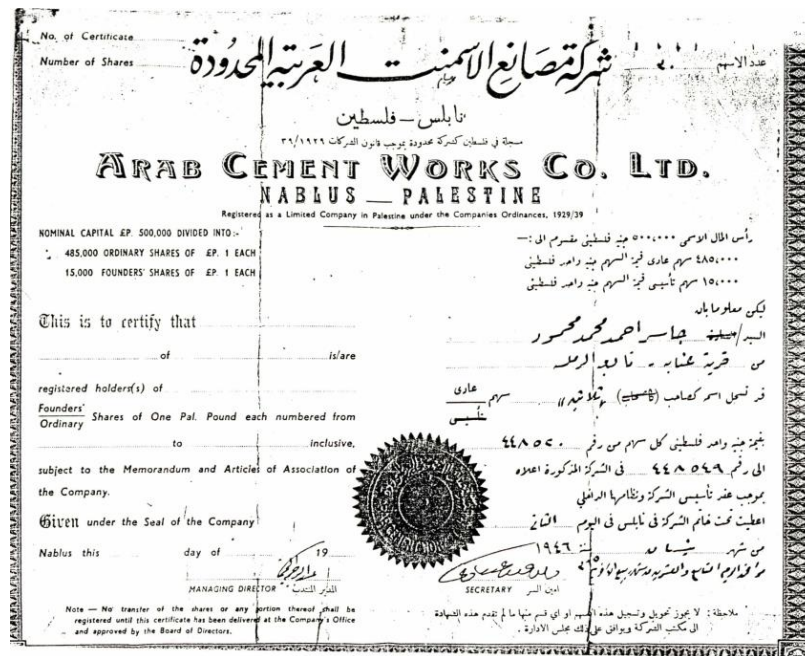


Fig 1.1 Arab Cement Works certificate of shares, ‘Innaba, 1946, Birzeit University Research Center.

¹²⁵ “The Palestine Arab Cement Scheme,” December 4, 1946, ISA-NonGovernment-ArabCommrcChambJer-000zy9l. In late July 1944, the solicitor Anton (Antun) ‘Atalla, sent the British chief secretary a proposal on behalf of the newly formed Riad Building Company and Arab Building Company to establish a cement factory. Initially refused by the British due to inability to import the necessary machinery due to the war, ‘Atalla sent a second proposal after hostilities in Europe concluded and was granted a meeting. This time, the government was willing to permit the companies import machinery after the end of 1945. I was unable to find evidence of any further actions taken by either company. *Arab Cement Factory* (1945), ISA-Privatecollections-ArabLawyers-001081p.

¹²⁶ *Filastin*, May 24, 1945; *al-Difa’*, July 17, 1945.

During the first year of its operation, the company appointed a board and auditors, reached an agreement with a machinery manufacturer to supply all necessary equipment, and selected land for purchase. In purchasing machinery, the ACW initially pursued a strategy not dissimilar to Michael Pollak's in Nesher's early days. It began negotiations with the British-Danish FL Smidth company, due to ACW's "initial desire to give priority to British Manufacturers." Smidth's supply schedule proved slow, however, prohibiting even partial fulfilment in the 26-month period ACW had set for beginning production. In a letter to the Controller of Heavy Industries (CHI), the company explained that despite their preference for British machinery, they were forced to sign an agreement with the U.S. Kennedy company. Given Palestine's urgent need for cement, the speedy launch of operations was a priority. At this stage, all that stood in the ACW's way appeared to be an import license for the machinery and the release of U.S. currency to fund the purchase. The company applied to the CHI for both on October 31, 1946 and began searching for a director and an office near al-Ramla.¹²⁷ By late spring 1947, those who followed the ACW's progress in the press had reason to be optimistic. On May 28, *Filastin* reported that "after mighty efforts" the company had secured an import license for the machinery and the U.S. currency to pay for it. With this news, the value of the company's shares rose.¹²⁸ Sixteen years since a Palestinian national cement factory was first suggested, and after a series of unrealized initiatives over the previous decade, this "great national economic project" seemed to finally be getting off the ground.

¹²⁷ "The Palestine Arab Cement Scheme," December 4, 1946.

¹²⁸ *Filastin*, May 28, 1947.

Behind the scenes, however, it was the ground that was the problem. In December 1946, the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce reported that the ACW had purchased plots of land between ‘Innaba and Jimzu in al-Ramla district, after “experts from the Hilwan Cement Works of Egypt” examined the soil and recommended its suitability.¹²⁹ A January 1947 letter from ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Tamimi to the High Commissioner reveals that the purchase of the lands was done “in trust” by “some members of the Board of Directors as a temporary measure.” Tamimi explained that the administrator general had responded positively to the ACW’s request to purchase the lands in its name according to the Companies Ordinances of 1929/39.

Difficulties arose when the ACW applied to register them with the Registrar of Lands.¹³⁰ Ya‘qub ‘Atalla of the Registrar of Lands had confirmed that the company was eligible to purchase the lands in accordance with the Companies Ordinances. Under the Land Transfer Regulations of 1940, however, “the transfer of any land from a Palestinian Arab to a non-Palestinian person in Area A is forbidden.” Since race was one of the “assumed qualifications” (*al-quyud al-mafrūḍa*) of the regulations, it was these, not the Companies Ordinances, that prohibited the ACW from registering the lands. Regardless of the owners of the company, ‘Atalla explained, “It is impossible for a company to possess race” (*la yumkin li-sharika an taktasib al-jinsiyya*).¹³¹ It is important to note that the translation of *jinsiyya* as “race” is not an obvious one. The term was most frequently

¹²⁹ “The Palestine Arab Cement Scheme,” December 4, 1946.

¹³⁰ Abdul Rahim Tamimi to High Commissioner, January 29, 1947, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000nji2.

¹³¹ Ya‘qub ‘Atalla, Department of the Registrar of Lands to President of the Board of Directors, AWC, January 20, 1947, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000nji2.

used to refer to nationality, but could interchangeably describe race, ethnicity, sexuality, and even tribal affiliation in certain contexts. However, as will become evident below, in the case of the AWC, the potential ambiguity of the Arabic term is amply clarified by how other British officials discussed the regulations.¹³²

The registrar's reasoning, upheld by the high commissioner on two separate occasions, raises multiple issues. First, it seems to run counter to the purpose of the 1940 Land Transfer Regulations. The British had presented these regulations, put into place following the publication of the 1939 White Paper in the context of the 1936–39 revolt, as a measure to protect the Palestinian population from the increasing threat of landlessness. That is, restrictions on the transfer of lands from Palestinian Arabs to “anyone other than a Palestinian Arab” – understood to mean Zionist settlers, first and foremost – was intended to ensure that “‘the rights and position’ of the Arab population be duly preserved.” In certain areas (referred to as “Zone A” in the regulations, and including the area between ‘Inabba and Jimzu where the ACW had conducted surveys and where its board members had purchased lands in trust), Palestinians’ rights were accounted the strictest protections and the transfer of land therein would be prohibited “save in exceptional cases.”¹³³

The registrar had correctly anticipated that the ACW would claim that the fact that it was “100% per cent Arab in Capital and in Membership,” should suffice to exclude the company from being considered “non-Arab.” When the ACW appealed, the office of

¹³² See, for example, the various uses of *jinsiyya* (and *jins*, from which it is derived) in the context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Egypt: Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade*.

¹³³ “Land Transfer Regulations, 1940,” *Official Gazette Extraordinary*, February 27, 1940, no. 988, Supplement No. 2, 337–39.

the acting secretary general suggested that the company apply for consideration again through the district commissioner.¹³⁴ Although the company's second application is missing from the file found at the Israel State Archives, the July 1947 response from the office of the general secretary states once again that a company is "not a 'Palestinian Arab'" within the definitions of the Land Transfer Regulations. The High Commissioner, it adds, rejected the application since he "has no power to grant permission for the transfer."¹³⁵

The Mandate administration's reasoning – that "it is impossible for a company to possess race" – further raises questions about the scope of corporate personhood and the applicability of race as a category in the Palestinian context. If the legal notion that corporations are persons, widely accepted in British law by the second decade of the twentieth century and enshrined in the 1922 Palestine Order in Council, still makes us somewhat uneasy, then the very question of whether a corporation can possess "race" can seem altogether dumbfounding.¹³⁶ In the United States, race has been intricately linked to the legal history of corporate personhood. These links began with *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) and extend through the long history of corporations basing claims to legal rights on the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution – introduced during Reconstruction, partially as a corrective to the *Dred Scott* decision, to ensure the

¹³⁴ E. Matta, on behalf of the Chief Secretary to the AWC, February 9, 1947, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000nji2.

¹³⁵ E. Matta, on behalf of the Acting Chief Secretary to the District Commissioner, Lydda District, July 31, 1947, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000nji2.

¹³⁶ *Palestine Order in Council*, 1922, article 2; Peter Stein, "Nineteenth Century English Company Law and Theories of Legal Personality," *Quaderni Fiorentini per la Storia del Pensiero Giuridico Moderno* 11/12, no. 1 (1982–83): 503–519.

citizenship rights of freed black American slaves.¹³⁷ In the British Empire, however, such links appear to have been less pivotal, or at the very least have been less well documented and researched.¹³⁸

In Palestine, links between race and corporate personhood seem to have first arisen directly in relation to the Land Transfer Regulations. The regulations mention companies only in their capacity as potential mortgage holders. However, Amendment 16D to the Palestine Order in Council, put forward on May 25, 1939 to facilitate the Land Transfer Regulations, introduced the category of “bodies of persons corporate or unincorporated” as separate from the categories of Arab and Jew.¹³⁹ This in itself hardly suffices to interpret race as the operative category here. Shira Robinson has rightfully noted the “slippery boundaries” that existed between race, culture, nation, and people in international law, within the Mandate system, and in British Mandate Palestine specifically.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Austin Allen, “The Political Economy of Blackness: Citizenship, Corporations, and Race in *Dred Scott*,” *Civil War History* 5, no. 3 (2003): 229–260; John A. Powell and Caitlin Watt, “Corporate Prerogative, Race, and Identity under the Fourteenth Amendment,” *Cardozo Law Review* 32, no. 3 (2011): 885–904.

¹³⁸ Brenna Bhandar’s work on the Canadian, Australian and Palestinian/Israeli contexts argues for the “conjoined articulation” of private property relations and racial formations in settler colonial contexts. Joseph R. Slaughter’s work, meanwhile, traces the evolution of corporate personhood in international law (and indeed of the very idea of persons as subject to international law and human rights) to the safeguarding of nineteenth century imperial charter companies’ territorial and trade interests in Africa. Taken alongside one another, such works indicate that perhaps here too, as in the US instance, property served a crucial mediatory role between the categories of race and the corporation. See: Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property*; Joseph R. Slaughter, “However Incompletely, Human,” in *The Meaning of Rights: The Philosophy and Social Theory of Human Rights*, ed. Costas Douzinas and Conor Gearty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 272–297.

¹³⁹ “Part II: Executive,” *Consolidated Palestine Orders in Council, 1922–1927*, Article 16D.

¹⁴⁰ Shira Robinson, *Citizen Stranger*, 15–18. Laura Robson describes the British turn to racial categorization and distinction between “Arab” and “Jew” in Palestine, instead of the previously accepted “communal” categorization adapted from the Ottoman Empire, beginning in the early 1930s. The British use of racial distinctions in the early months of the construction of the Haifa harbor as early as 1928, discussed in detail in Chapter 2 below, indicates that the management of labor may have been an entry point for such categorization. See: Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*, 106–109.

Yet the Land Transfer Regulations appear to have inspired British officials to employ systematic racial thinking. In May 1940, roughly three months after the publication of the Regulations, the British chief secretary issued directions for the submission of land transfer applications, noting that for each “transferee and transferor [in each application] should be included race, nationality and where habitually residing.”¹⁴¹ The inclusion of race as a category quickly spurred questions and doubts as to how British officials should classify different Palestinians racially in this context. Within months, the director of land registration for Jerusalem and the district commissioners of Jerusalem and Haifa raised questions of whether Palestinian Druze and Palestinian Armenians should be considered Palestinian Arabs under the regulations. The chief secretary opined that “Druzes are Arabs who profess the Durzi creed. [Therefore] I think that a Palestinian Durzi is a Palestinian Arab in the sense of the . . . Land Transfer Regulations.” Regarding a potential Armenian transferee, the chief secretary decidedly stated that, “[h]e may be regarded as ordinarily resident in Palestine; but he is not an Arab. Ethnologically he belongs to the Aryan race.” The regulations seemed to have awoken the inner race-scientist in some.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Chief Secretary to Assistant District Commissioners, May 30, 1940, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000mppd.

¹⁴² ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000mppd: Jerusalem District Director of Land Registration to Chief Secretary, August 24, 1940; Haifa District Commissioner to Chief Secretary, September 14, 1940; Jerusalem District Commissioner to Chief Secretary, October 5, 1940; C.S.O. Minute Paper, September 27, 1940, and October 15, 1940. A later case saw the Director of Land Registration issue a detailed explanation of the racial and social standing of Circassian Palestinians. Responding to an inquiry from the chief secretary regarding a potential Circassian transferee, the director stated that Circassians “may be said to form part of the Arab community.” However, in terms of race he found that he was “able to discover very little regarding the origin of the Circassians . . . One theory connects them with the Goths.” He then concluded that “the Circassian communities are undoubtedly an established and accepted part of the population, but on the other hand they are racially entirely foreign to the Arabs.” Director of Land Transfer to Chief Secretary, “Land Transfer Regulations 1940. Circassians,” February 18, 1948, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000mtyn.

By the time the problem of determining the race of corporations arose several years later, the idea that the terms Arab and Jew in the regulations were first and foremost racial categories was firmly ingrained. In a March 1945 letter seeking legal advice regarding the regulations' application to companies, the director of land registration expressed his understanding that "the fundamental principles of the Regulations are based on race and residence and whilst a company may enjoy the latter, the former does not reside in it." Several months later, the acting chief secretary affirmed the legal opinion of the attorney general, without mentioning race specifically. Rather, he returned to the distinctions made in Amendment 16D to the Palestine Order in Council between Arabs, Jews, and "bodies of people corporate or unincorporate [sic]." The attorney general explained that

having regard to the express reference in Article 16D to bodies corporate, it seems to me that the words "Arab" and "Jew" therein, do not include corporations. "Person" is nowhere mentioned in the article (except as "bodies of persons") and accordingly one cannot introduce the definition of the word person, in conjunction with the word "Arab."¹⁴³

This legal opinion shaped the application of the regulations for the remainder of the Mandate.

British approaches to the Land Transfer Regulations' application to companies were not limited to legalistic argumentation regarding corporate personhood or ideas about race. There were those among the British authorities who argued that companies be excluded from the regulations to better fulfill the "spirit of the White Paper" – that is, to

¹⁴³ ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryLand-000mtyn: Director of Land Registration to Chief Secretary, March 6, 1945; C.S.O Minute Paper, June 19, 1945; Acting Chief Secretary to Director of Land Registration, June 29, 1945.

safeguard the Palestinian peasants (*fallahin*) in danger of becoming landless against potential Zionist attempts to subvert the regulations. In November 1945, the Land Transfer Inquiry Committee, appointed earlier that year to investigate alleged contraventions of the regulations and make recommendations regarding their implementation, issued its final report. Among other issues, the report addressed proposals to exclude Arab companies from the ruling that no company is a Palestinian Arab. The committee argued against such an exclusion, “since a nominal Arab company might in reality be controlled, either in the present or in the future, by Jews.”¹⁴⁴ In the same breath it recognized that, “under the present ruling the development of legitimate Arab companies is frustrated by inability to acquire necessary land.” Accordingly, they recommended the exclusion be temporary, to be removed following “the provision of adequate safeguards.” The fate of the Arab Cement Works demonstrates that no such safeguards were ever put in place.

An article which appeared in *Filastin* on 28 March 1948, when war was already raging in the land, described the ACW’s annual company meeting held in Nablus the morning before. The company, at least as a business entity, seemed to have survived the registrar’s decision. However, the article made no mention of machinery en route from America, nor of the progress of the company’s plant construction. The registrar’s decision was likely a death blow, the last in a series of events which over fifteen years stymied any Palestinian attempts to challenge Nesher’s monopoly. Whether the logic behind the registrar’s decision was that of limiting corporate personhood, as Ya‘qub

¹⁴⁴ “Report of the Land Transfer Inquiry Committee,” November 1947, ISA-Mandatory Organizations-SecretaryLand-000mx79.

‘Atalla’s original letter implied, or of upholding the spirit of the White Paper, against the specter of “nominally Arab companies” potentially “controlled by Jews,” the results were the same. The very measures designed to protect Palestinian land rights were turned against a venture that, for nearly two decades, many Palestinians saw as crucial to their ability to build their futures.¹⁴⁵

A Mournful Commodity

In late February 1941, Palestinian capitalist Emile Boutagy wrote heartfelt letters to five of the most powerful British officials in Palestine. All five letters dealt with the abrupt cancellation of an import license for one thousand tons of cement from Syria, obtained by two businessmen, Malas and Budayr. More striking than the details of the transaction’s cancellation, whose reversal Boutagy sought, it is the language Boutagy used to write about cement. The letters offer variations on the same theme: because Nesher’s produce was entirely consumed by the war effort and importing cement from overseas was impossible, cement had become in Boutagy’s words, “a matter of life and death,” which “would be a God send for those hungering for [it].” It was, after all, a material which “no

¹⁴⁵ The establishment of a Palestinian cement factory has, in fact, remained an unfulfilled goal, still frequently cast in nationalist, even anti-colonial, terms. A 1998 report authored by Mahmoud Abu Rob of al-Najah University set out to explore the prospects of founding a cement factory in the West Bank at the time. Abu Rob mentions two previous attempts, the first in Hebron (al-Khalil) in 1978 and the latter again in Nablus in 1993. Mahmoud Abu-Rob, *Afaq Sina‘at al-Asmant fi Filastin* [Establishing a Cement Factory in Palestine] (Nablus: al-Da’ira al-Iqtisadiyya, Markaz al-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya, 1998), 114–15. More recently, the Sanad Construction Resources Company, a subsidiary of the Palestinian Authority’s Palestine Investment Fund, announced plans to establish the Palestine Cement Factory in the Bethlehem area. The decision was officially announced in October 2016, but local communities near the selected site, primarily the people of ‘Arab al-Rashayda, have shown considerable resistance to the plan, citing concerns for their livelihoods. See: “West Bank Cement Factory,” *Environmental Justice Atlas*, last updated April 15, 2019, <http://ejatlas.org/conflict/gaza-cement-factory-palestine> [accessed: June 20, 2020]; Andrew Ross, *Stone Men: the Palestinians who Built Israel* (London: Verso, 2019), 191–98.

country in the world can exist without.”¹⁴⁶ Boutagy’s writing was often flowery and dramatic, even when arguing for the necessity of gramophone records to lift up British troops’ morale during the war, or of original Kiwi shoe polish as opposed to “monstrous imitations.”¹⁴⁷ None of Boutagy’s writing elsewhere, however, matches the existential tone of his writing about the cement shortage. In a more informal letter to George As‘ad Khader, secretary of the Arab Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem (figure 1.2), Boutagy wrote of the British decision to cancel the import license: “These people are really committing suicide.”

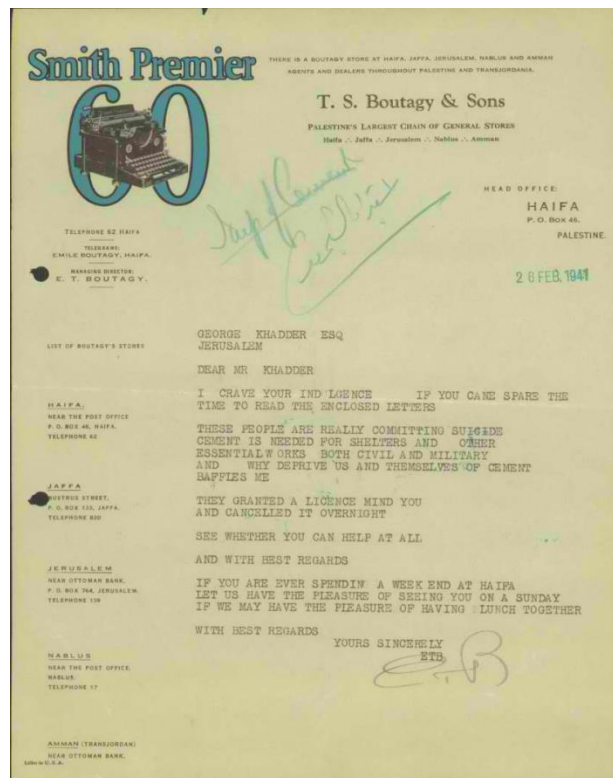


Fig. 2.2. Letter of Emile Boutagy to George As‘ad Khader, February 28, 1942, Israel State Archives.

¹⁴⁶ ISA-NonGovernment-ArabCommrcChambJer-000zt5k: Emile Boutagy to British Commercial Agent, February 25, 1941; Emile Boutagy to Director of Public Works, February 25, 1941; Emile Boutagy to Chief Secretary, February 25, 1941; Emile Boutagy to JCD Cox Esq., Barclay Bank, Haifa, February 25, 1941; Emile Boutagy to High Commissioner, February 28, 1941.

¹⁴⁷ ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000m3p9: Emile Boutagy to Chief Secretary, June 14, 1942; Emile Boutagy to Colonial Secretary, August 21, 1944.

Boutagy was not alone in equating the ability to build – and specifically to build in cement – and the preservation of life itself. The discourse of the “cement crisis” after World War II also was rife with portrayals of cement as a provider of jobs and shelter, as a commodity linked to “the welfare of the country,” the supply of which was part of “safeguarding the rights of the public.”¹⁴⁸ An “incessant flow of appeals and grievances” led the Haifa Chamber of Commerce, for example, to write to the British chief secretary of the crisis having “detrimental bearing on the vital nourishment of building projects.” Cement, more than any other material, became synonymous with the capacity and necessity to build in order to survive.

Although the press and the chambers of commerce may be seen as stirring up emotions for the benefit of commercial interests, there is some evidence that the link between building materials and the capacity to build held similar emotional significance for others as well. In 1942, for example, Sitt Amina al-Khalidi, left an endowment (*waqf*) for the establishment of a new hospital in Jerusalem’s Shaykh Jarrah neighborhood. That summer, the executors of Khalidi’s will appealed to the British to approve the hospital’s location and release the necessary building materials for its construction. Progress on the location seemed to be made quickly, but Khalidi’s trustees apparently sensed that the issue of building materials might require additional pressure.¹⁴⁹ Thus, in mid-November,

¹⁴⁸ Samaan Abdo (Sam‘an ‘Abdu), Secretary of the Arab Tile & Cement Products Factory Owners Association to the Chief Secretary, December 10, 1946, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000m8p3.

¹⁴⁹ Initial reports of progress securing the land were overly optimistic. Beginning November 18, 1942, only days after the first petitions on building materials were sent, a dispute arose between Amina al-Khalidi’s heirs and those she had charged with the *waqf*. The hospital was never completed. Ahmed Samih al-Khalidi on behalf of the Trustees of Sitt Amineh Khalidi’s Hospital to H. Kendall Esq., Town Planning Adviser, July 22, 1942, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-MandateHealth-000zbow; *Waqf of Amineh bint Bader el-Khalidi* (sic), ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryMuslims-000tdej.

a coordinated series of petitions with over three hundred signatories were sent from multiple locations in Palestine to the high commissioner, to pressure the government to release the materials necessary for construction. While some of the petitions requested the British to facilitate the construction of the hospital more broadly, others explicitly referred to the release of building materials. Many of the telegrams used distinctly emotional, even heartrending appeals. They described the facilitation of the hospital's construction – that is, the release of building materials – “as a measure of reducing the tortures of which humanity is suffering,” “a contribution toward the alleviation of the sufferings of the poor,” and “a measure of service to humanity.”¹⁵⁰ The capacity to construct, reduced to access to building materials, meant the world.

The multiple facets of cement's history endowed the seemingly drab material with emotional resonance.¹⁵¹ Within the discourse of Hebrew building expertise in cement and concrete, Palestinian structures made of these materials were always ready to collapse, their disintegration inevitable and imminent. The ideal materials for building the Jewish homeland anew were imagined as somehow beyond the grasp of Palestinians. Of course, from the point of view of skill, of capacity, of initiative, they never were. Yet, the Yishuv garnered advantages elsewhere. The political and economic order that developed during

¹⁵⁰ *Building Materials for the Construction of a Moslem Hospital in Jerusalem: Late Amineh al-Khaldi* [sic], ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000lp5q.

¹⁵¹ The work of cultural theorist Sara Ahmed is useful in understanding how an object like cement can become so emotionally charged. Ahmed defines an affective economy, as the economy-like circulation of subjects or objects and the discourses related to them which generate positive or negative emotional attachments. In other words, “a theory of passion not as the drive to accumulate..., but as that which is accumulated over time.” Sara Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 117–39. While Ahmed centers her work on the affective economy of fear as an emotion which “sticks” to the racialized bodies of immigrants, others have already extended the concept to “mundane” objects. See, for example, Alev P. Kuruoğlu and Güliz Ger, “An Emotional Economy of Mundane Objects,” *Consumption Markets & Culture* 18, no. 3 (2015): 209–38.

the Mandate, solidifying Nesher as a monopoly, seemed to withstand any challenge thrown its way. Time and again, British interests appeared to coalesce with those of the company. What Palestinians lacked during the Mandate then was neither expertise nor skill; rather, empire and its racialized legal structures, not labor, ended up structuring the political economy of cement.

At the same time, these very materials became intertwined not only with visions of the national future cultivated by economic and cultural elites, but more importantly, with tangible, concrete needs. The prolonged “cement crisis” transformed cement’s absence into something that was felt by countless Palestinians daily. As the notion of crisis circulated, cement, more than any other building material, became an object of desire and longing – the key to the capacity to build and to live. It was, as Ivan Lloyd-Phillips from the Gaza district commissioner’s office put it, “a mournful commodity.”¹⁵²

These configurations did not suddenly cease to exist with the catastrophe of 1948. Dreams and nightmares of cement and concrete continued to haunt Palestinians well beyond the Nakba, taking different yet eerily familiar forms.¹⁵³ Seemingly defying their own physical properties, cement and concrete traveled alongside those who were forced to leave and sat heavy on those who remained, somehow always maintaining a fleeting sense of promise, echoed in 2014, with a bitter smile, by Gazan artist Islam Ayoub: “Oh, cement, oh, beloved/you are always on my mind.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² I. Ll.-Phillips, District Commissioner’s Office, Gaza to Acting Chief Secretary Dalgleish, December 14, 1946, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-SecretaryCommerce-000m8p3.

¹⁵³ Weizman, *Hollow Land*; Jabareen and Dbiat, *Adrikhalut ve-Orientalizm*; Abourahme, “Assembling and Spilling-Over”; and Rubaii, “Concrete and Livability in Occupied Palestine.”

¹⁵⁴ Islam Ayoub, *Misthaq ya-Ghali/Mishtaq Ashufak*, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAokpPN9yw4 (last accessed: 1 July 2020).

CHAPTER 2: WHERE I END AND YOU BEGIN: ARABS, JEWS, AND MACHINES IN MANDATE PALESTINE'S STONE QUARRIES

For a brief period in the summer of 1931, the city of Haifa was abuzz with conversation of a mysterious photograph, the provenance and nature of which were unclear. The first to report on the photograph was the leading Palestinian Arabic daily, *Filastin*. On Friday, August 21st, 1931, the newspaper's "Haifa Dispatch" included a story titled "Machine Gun or Rock-Breaking Machine" (*Arshash am Makinat Taksir Hijara*), which reported that the people of Haifa were exchanging rumors (*yatadawal al-nas fi Haifa ḥadith*) of a photograph of ten Jewish men training to use a machine gun.¹⁵⁵

Following some investigation, the article states, *Filastin*'s reporter was able to trace the photograph back to Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim (1889-1953), a leading Haifa businessman. Ibrahim, a member of Palestine's class of "men of capital," told the reporter that he had indeed received the photograph, but that it had been seized by the police.¹⁵⁶ The reporter, following what he "saw as [his] journalistic duty" (*min wajibi al-ṣuḥufi*), then went to inquire with Haifa's Deputy Chief of Police on the matter. The Deputy reassured the reporter that he himself had looked into the photo, and that it in fact depicted not Jewish men training to fire a machine gun, but working at the Athlit quarry –

¹⁵⁵ *Filastin*, August 21, 1931, 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Filastin*, August 21, 1931, 4. Ibrahim appears as a primary figure among Palestine's "men of capital" in Sherene Seikaly's book of the same name. Seikaly, *Men of Capital*.

a government quarry just south of Haifa, which supplied stone for the ongoing construction of the Haifa deep-water harbor. What people were saying was a machine gun, the Deputy noted, was in fact a machine for breaking rocks. Nonetheless, the Deputy Chief promised *Filastin*'s reporter that he would go to the quarry the following day and photograph the people and the machine from the original. He would then provide the newspaper with both the original and the new photograph for comparison.¹⁵⁷

The rumors surrounding this mysterious photograph – the focus of this chapter's first section – accompanied a broader controversy regarding firearms which the British authorities provided to Jewish settlements in the wake of the bloody events of summer 1929.¹⁵⁸ It was therefore reasonable to conclude as the British did, that the matter could be laid to rest simply by convincing the public that what the photographs depicted was a drilling machine, not a machine gun. That is, to assume that for the Palestinian public, the fear of armed Jewish settlers was all that was at stake. However, in this chapter, I argue that the controversy and confusion as to the nature of the objects portrayed in these photographs can be explained not merely by a similarity in physical form - the fact that certain machine guns of the period and certain drilling apparatuses could appear similar to the lay public. By placing the two instruments alongside one another, this controversy calls attention to how such drilling apparatuses, while by no means commensurate with machine guns, did become tools in the gradual, long-term processes of Palestinian

¹⁵⁷ *Filastin*, August 21, 1931, 4.

¹⁵⁸ On the violent clashes of 1929, known in Arabic as *Thawrat al-Buraq* (the al-Buraq Revolt) and in Hebrew as *Me'ora 'ot Tarpa'i* (the 1929 Events), see: Rana Barakat, "*Thawrat al-Buraq* in British Mandate Palestine: Jerusalem, Mass Mobilization and Colonial Politics, 1928-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2007); Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1929*, trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2015); Barakat, "Reading Palestinian Agency in Mandate History."

replacement and displacement from labor and land. That is, quarry drills, jackhammers, compressors, and other such instruments, allowed Zionist settlers and institutions to enact the sort of “unspectacular” processes, which Rob Nixon has called, “slow violence.” At the same time, it is important to note that the “weaponization” of the quarry extended to more directly observable and immediate forms of violence as well, adding yet another layer to the “confusion” between which the machine gun or rock-breaking machine controversy. As early as the first decade of British rule, more militant Zionists quickly found that quarries – by virtue of the labor processes and materials they involved – were ideal settings for weapons training and explosive manufacture. There, loud explosions were par for the course, providing an aural cover for weapons training, while the explosives themselves could be repurposed for military uses.¹⁵⁹

In Palestine’s quarries, British racial ideologies intersected with differences in skill and productivity, the economic logic of “Hebrew labor” and the racialized concept of a differential “standard of living” for Arabs and (European) Jews. As a result, machinery and mechanization processes became a necessary ally in the Zionist “conquest of stone” (*kibush ha-even*). Jackhammers, drills, excavators, and other machines became the means with which Jewish workers could “infiltrate” the stone industry. They allowed Jewish workers to displace Palestinian ones by overcoming what was, at times begrudgingly, conceived of

¹⁵⁹ Mordekhai Raikher, ed., *ha-‘Emda ha-Kidmit : Migdal Tsedek ba-‘Avoda, ba-Shemira, ba-Milhamah* [The Forward Post: Migdal Tsedek in Work, on Guard, in War] (Petah Tikva: Beit Neta [Harpaz], 1968); Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). Several recent works have considered Nixon’s idea of “slow violence” in relation to contemporary Palestinian realities in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Naqab/Negev desert. See, for example: Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, *Waste Siege: The Life of Infrastructure in Palestine*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); Isabelle Hesse, “Sensory Siege: Dromocolonisation, Slow Violence, and Poetic Realism in the Twenty-First Century Short Story from Gaza,” *Journal for Cultural Research* 21, no. 2 (2017): 190–203.

as the formers' physical deficiency in comparison to the latter, as well as "pure" economic considerations such as productivity and profitability.

The chapter's first section follows *Filastin*'s investigations into the mysterious photograph, the British reactions to the affair, and the regional, and even global, circulation of multiple images claiming to truthfully represent what the original photograph had captured. It places the photographic affair in the context of the "armory scare" of the summer of 1931, regional interest in the intensifying frictions between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, and the emergence of Palestinian mass party-politics. The chapter's second section uses the construction of the Haifa deep-water harbor and its Athlit Quarry as entry-points to examine the racializing and anti-racist discourses about bodily, intellectual, and cultural capacities and needs of workers which emerged under the British Mandate. It demonstrates that historical actors articulated both the justifications for a racialized division of labor and opposition to it in terms drawn from global and imperial discourses about race, whiteness, and racial subjugation.

The two sections which follow examine how individuals who took part in the Zionist conquest of stone discussed quarrying work and the quarrying industry, both in contemporary debates as well as in their memoirs. I ask how the Zionist project of national regeneration of land and self, founded in part upon the idea of recovering the relationship between Jewish bodies and the Jewish homeland, took shape in an industry which proved particularly difficult to "conquer." In Palestine's stone quarries, I argue, the processes of refashioning the land and the self – which Zionist thinkers frequently envisioned as driven by unmediated desire and connection between the two – in fact

rested upon material and cultural mediators: the Palestinian quarrier, and quarrying machinery.

During the mandate, the stone industry had no Jewish success stories like that of the Nesher Cement Factory. Beginning in the early 1920s, Zionist attempts at the conquest of stone frequently took the form of apprenticeship under Palestinian, and at times, Mizrahi masters. The chapter's third section studies Jewish quarriers' dependence on Palestinian expertise. It demonstrates that Zionist imitation of indigenous Palestinian practices extended beyond self-Orientalizing aesthetic practices, with which it is most associated. In the stone quarry, among other places, both the creation of the "new Jew" and the regeneration of the Jewish homeland depended on the appropriation of Palestinian skills, knowledge, sensibilities, and bodies.

The fourth section shows how machinery emerged as a primary weapon in what was, at its core, a struggle to replace and displace Palestinian quarry labor. The adoption of mechanization as part of an economic discourse of efficiency and productivity aligned Zionist institutions' strategies with racial and colonial divisions of labor which the ideology of labor Zionism ostensibly rejected. Finally, this section juxtaposes this embrace of mechanization with an article on the very same question published in 1935 in the Palestinian economic journal, *al-'Iqtisadiyyat al-Arabiyya*. The article's author, Edward F. Nickoley, discusses the relationship between labor power and mechanization throughout "the Near East." However, read in the Palestinian context and on the backdrop of Zionism's increasing embrace of mechanization as a means of "slow violence," Nickoley's article reveals an alternative approach to the relationship between

machinery and labor: one which regards displacement and replacement as threat rather than promise.

Machine Gun or Rock-Breaking Machine?

The headline, “Machine Gun or Rock-Breaking Machine” made its second appearance in the pages of *Filastin* on Tuesday, August 25th, four days after the first story. The newspaper’s Haifa correspondent notified readers that in the interim, he had visited the Deputy Chief of Police again as agreed. During the visit, the Deputy presented the reporter with the original photograph which had inspired the rumors, alongside a second one which he had taken during his visit to the quarry, allowing the reporter to examine both photos side by side. Unfortunately, the reporter’s conclusions from the comparison were somewhat equivocal. The machine in the second photograph appeared to him larger than that appearing in the first. The photograph portrayed only five men, and not ten. He did, however, identify the five as being among those who appeared in the original.¹⁶⁰

Despite his prior agreement with the Deputy Chief, the reporter’s attempts to receive copies of both photographs so that they could be published in *Filastin* - presumably to allow readers to judge for themselves - came to naught. Still not altogether convinced, the reporter admitted to his readers that he knew little about either machine guns or quarrying drills. Therefore, he writes, he arranged for an acquaintance, ‘Izzat Bey al-Qassem, a former officer in the Ottoman army, to visit the Deputy Chief the following day and examine the photographs for himself. Upon examination, the readers of *Filastin*

¹⁶⁰ *Filastin*, August 25, 1931, 4.

are told, ‘Izzat Bey was more decisive in his conclusion: he declared the two photos to be of the same machine, and that the machine itself was undoubtedly intended for rock-breaking.¹⁶¹

‘Izzat Bey’s conclusions seem to have convinced *Filastin*’s reporter, as the newspaper ceased to question the British claims about the photograph in its reporting. Convincing the wider public, however, proved more difficult. The British authorities, likely eager to quell such rumors at a time when Palestinian Arab fears of the arming of Palestine’s Jewish settlements were rampant, decided to address it publicly. On August 26th, a day after *Filastin* apparently put its inquiries to rest, an official government communique addressing the matter appeared in multiple Arabic, Hebrew, and English-language newspapers:

In the course of an article which appeared recently in an Arabic newspaper the Government was asked if it would publish the results of its enquiries on the subject of a photograph which was found in Haifa on or about August 10, and which was supposed to represent a cannon or machine-gun surrounded by a group of Jewish men.

A copy of the photograph has been procured and it has been ascertained that the photograph was taken at the Athlit Quarries, that the young men are members of a party of quarry workers, and that the implement which has been mistaken for a gun is a machine for drilling holes in the rock for quarrying purposes.¹⁶²

Yet, despite the broadly circulated communique, “the machine gun myth,” as the British eventually referred to it, quickly circulated beyond Palestine’s boundaries,

¹⁶¹ ‘Izzat Bey’s precise involvement in the events may have been more extensive than simply providing expert testimony, or at least the British authorities suspected it to be. On September 1, a week after *Filastin* published his statement on the photograph, the authorities searched ‘Izzat Bey’s home, along with those of Husni ‘Abd al-Hadi and Hamza Tuqan, in connection with the photograph’s publication. *Palestine Bulletin*, September 3, 4; *Filastin*, September 4, 1931, 4; *Mir’at al-Sharq*, September 5, 1931, 4.

¹⁶² *Filastin*, August 26, 1931, 5; *Davar*, August 26, 1931; *Palestine Bulletin*, August 26, 1931, 1; *Davar*, September 27, 1931, 1.

subsequently also resurfacing within them. Within days of *Filastin*'s articles and the British rebuttal, three regional newspapers, the Egyptian *al-Ahram* and *al-Lata'if al-Musawwara* and the Lebanese *al-Ahrar*, reported of the affair. Their coverage, in turn, featured a third iteration of photographic evidence, depicting not ten or five men as in the previous photographs, but a single individual sitting in front of a machine the newspapers thought similarly enigmatic.

Multiple Palestinian publications reported that the Mandate authorities attempted to seize all copies of the newspapers featuring the new photograph.¹⁶³ In a conversation with *Filastin*, Major Partridge, the same Deputy Commander of the Haifa District Police, explained the seizure, claiming that “the photograph published by *al-Ahram* and *al-Ahrar* and the text written beneath it were written in an incendiary and misleading manner.”¹⁶⁴ *Filastin*, for its part, unequivocally dismissed the new photograph as fraudulent. Its Haifa

¹⁶³ *Filastin*, August 29, 1931, 4. The survival of a single copy of this variation on the photographic evidence of the affair sent from Palestine (fig. 1), indicates that some copies were likely not successfully seized. The copy, a rough negative of the image as published likely in either *al-Ahrar* or *al-Lata'if al-Musawwara*, was sent by Harry (Tzvi) Vitales, the manager of the Central Bank for Cooperative Institutions in Palestine to his peers in the Palestine Economic Corporation (PEC) in London and New York City on September 3, 1931. It found its way into the PEC's archive at the New York Public Library, where I first encountered it and the story of the photograph. Box 24, folder 2, New York Public Library (NYPL), Palestine Economic Corporation (PEC) Collection. See also: *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, August 30, 1931, 3; *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, August 30, 1931, 3; *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, August 31, 1931, 3; *Mir'at al-Sharq*, September 2, 1931, 4,5. The pan-Arab Jerusalem-based *al-Hayat*, offered a particularly interesting and poetic reading of the photograph when reporting of the seizure: “I saw it in *al-Ahram* before *al-Ahram* was seized, then I saw it in *al-Lata'if*, before *al-Lata'if* was seized, and I read in it lines (*suturan*), witnessed vestiges (*rusuman*) and foretold secrets (*iktahanat asraran*). I read in it profound lines (*suturan balighan*) warning the Arabs in these lands (*bi-hadhihi al-diyar*) of an imminent danger (*bi-khatar muhdiq*) that threatens their existence and intends to destroy what they built (literally, “their building,” *bunayanuhum*). I read in it lines, their letters, flying sparks, and their words a burning fire, and I witnessed in it vestiges, among them the vestige of the endeavor (*rasm al-tumuh*) to destroy what the Arabs had built (literally “the building of the Arabs”) in these lands, in iron and fire, and the erection of Zionism's edifice, in iron and fire. And as I was scrutinizing it, visions (*akhila*) passed through my mind (*marrat bi-dihni*) and warnings were revealed and thoughts gathered, however, I heard them at last delivering a sermon and saying: Oh Arabs, your opponent is strong and stubborn, he has the equipment and the ammunition... be strong... do not weep and do not worry.” *Al-Hayat*, September 2, 1931, 1.

¹⁶⁴ *Filastin*, August 30, 1931, 4.

correspondent, who had led the initial reportage and investigation, stated that since in the original photograph there were “ten young Jewish men around the instrument and not one [as in the new photograph],” the image which the Egyptian and Lebanese newspapers featured was “not the same photograph... and demands correction.”¹⁶⁵

Upon examination, the captions accompanying the photograph (figs. 2.1 & 2.2), which the Deputy Chief of Police had described as “incendiary and misleading,” seem to have leaned more towards the latter, perhaps not even intentionally so. Rather, they reflected and addressed the confusion and uncertainty which continued to surround the whole affair. The longer caption, appearing alongside the copy sent to the PEC offices in London and New York, describes the individual in the photograph as “said to be a Jew sitting behind a machine-gun;” states that the original photograph had been given to the Haifa Police by “those protesting against the arming of the Jews;” and narrates the British denial and explanation in full. Moreover, the editors clarify that they “do not know if this is the same photograph,” and accordingly present it “without commentary, leaving the judgment of whether what it represents is a machine gun or a device (*masura*, lit. ‘pipe’) for rock excavation, to the experts and specialists among the men of war and of quarries.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ *Filastin*, August 30, 1931, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Harry Vitales to Paul Singer, September 3, 1931, Box 24, Folder 2, Palestine Economic Corporation (PEC) Collection, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library (NYPL). From the standpoint of the British, the forceful reaction to the publication of this photograph was likely linked to the wider reach and greater credibility of these newspapers in comparison to the pamphlets which circulated the original image. It may also have been rooted in the fact that, at least to those “experts and specialists among the men of war and quarries” the caption called upon, the photograph *al-Ahram* and other regional newspapers carried, may not have been altogether too confusing. The instrument gripped by the young man in it appears almost certainly to have been a Vickers machine gun, which would likely have been familiar to many, at least among the first group of “men of war”. Yet in the absence of copies of the previous two

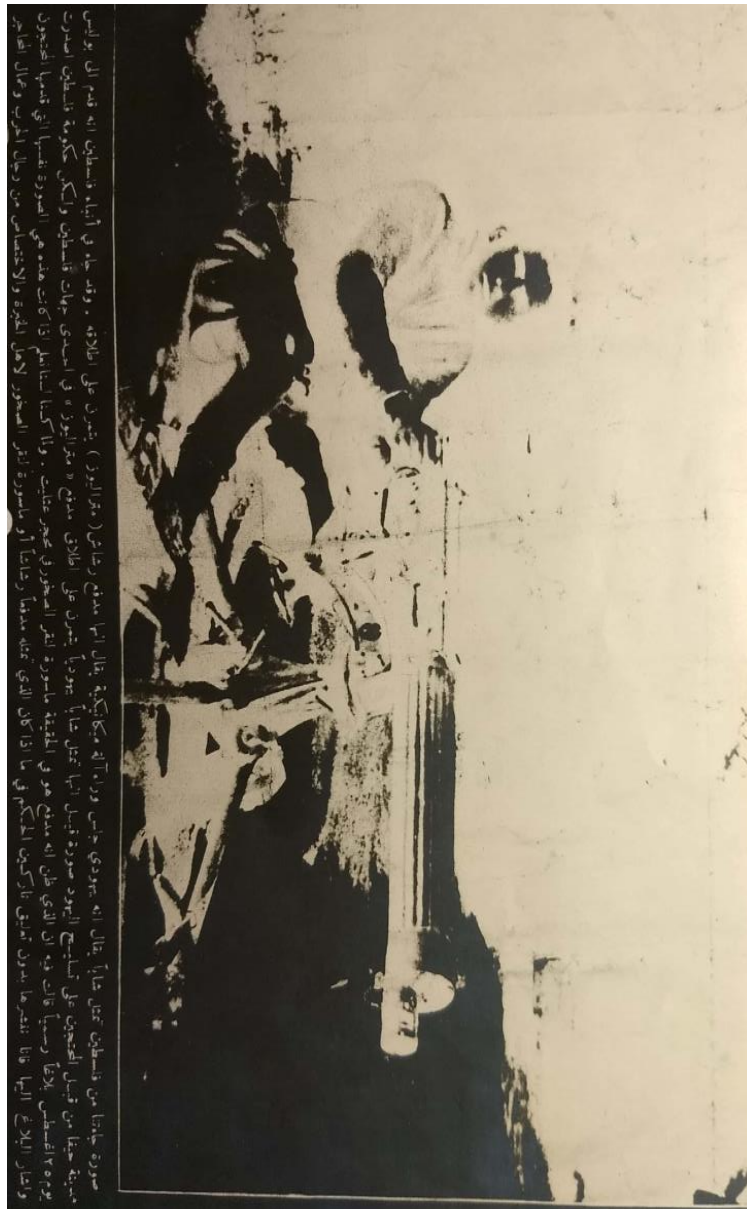


Fig. 2.1. Copy of photograph published in unspecified Arabic language newspaper. Box 24, Folder 2, Palestine Economic Corporation Collection, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

photographs, it is impossible to tell how similar or dissimilar this instrument was to the ones the British had previously claimed to be a quarrying device. I thank Ciruce Movahedi-Lankarani for calling my attention to the similarity between the instrument portrayed in Figure 3, and the Vickers machine gun. See: John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986 [1975]), Ch. 5.

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ملوك الصالح الأحرار

جرائم وحوادث واخبار
الصحف ٧٧ و ٧٨

1

• كرايلا • صحيفة الثورة العدد ٥

قائمة من حوالي ١٠٠٠ شخص
في ميناء بوز سبيد حيث أُلقيت
في قارب النجاة في ١٩٤٤

Abstract

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وان نمنزل صفاء جونا وجودة ترشاً
ودورهم الى السطحة السندة الحارة المرم

[illegible]

وقرأوا الكتاب بحفظ النظم
ويعلمون أيضاً أن تلك العروفا هي لغتها

وكانت تلك التغيرات قد وجدت لها
تجسيدا في عمل كل واحد من هؤلاء
المتقاعين، والذين انشؤوا الحياة في
تونس

فكانت هذه التغيرات قد وجدت لها
تجسيدا في عمل كل واحد من هؤلاء
المتقاعين، والذين انشؤوا الحياة في
تونس

[illegible][illegible]

إلى الوجه الصحيح

الف عن زراعة القطن ولكن
جسمه واذا ترقى حتى ينجلي اثر

Fig. 2.2. Frontpage of the Egyptian *al-Ahram*, August 27, 1931. The photograph appears at the top of the page, under the headline *Midfa' Mitraliyoz am Masura Naqr al-Ahjar* [Mitralleuse Gun or Stone Carving Device (lit. "pipe")]. The caption beneath dryly describes the Palestinian Arab and British claims regarding what the photograph depicts.

In the immediate background to the alarm the photographs raised were broader Palestinian concerns about the threat of Mandate authorities arming Zionist settlers. Such concerns, although not entirely new, had recently been sparked again in June of 1931. *Al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, a Jerusalem-based newspaper identified with the political line of the Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husayni and his supporters, reported that the British police were training Jewish settlers in the Tulkarm area, northwest of Nablus, to fire machine guns. Authorities' attempts to appease the Palestinian public and media by explaining that the arms provided were to be kept in sealed armories and for defense purposes only, as part of the changes made to the Palestine police force in the aftermath of the violent clashes of 1929, were largely unsuccessful.¹⁶⁷

Weldon C. Matthews shows that the revelation of the sealed armories became an important rallying cry for Palestinian nationalists, particularly among those who later in 1932 founded the Istiqlal (Independence) Party, Palestine's first mass-politics based party. Activists, many of whom were from Nablus, organized two congresses there on July 16 and 31 to discuss the armories, as well as subsequent protest strikes in Nablus and other cities on August 15.¹⁶⁸ Thus, when the pamphlet featuring the ten men and the mysterious machine first appeared in Haifa on or around August 10, it fed into a fear already shared by many. Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, who played a pivotal role in the quarrying machine/machine gun controversy, was among the Istiqlal Party's founders,

¹⁶⁷ That the armories had been kept a secret until *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya* exposed the story likely inspired little confidence. *Al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, June 26, 1931, 3. Cited in: Weldon Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 90-96.

¹⁶⁸ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire*, 90-96.

and was closely tied to the campaign against the Jewish armories. The photograph and the armory “scare,” it appears, were deeply intertwined.¹⁶⁹

A Colonial Division of Labor: Race at the Haifa Harbor Works

As chapter one has shown, by the late 1920s Zionist popular and British official discourses shared certain racialized conceptions of skill in working with specific materials – namely, cement and concrete, as opposed to local stone. The Zionist discourse of Jewish expertise in cement and concrete was embedded in the conquest of labor and in attempts to restructure the building trades in Palestine. British officials, meanwhile, turned to ideas about the innate physical and intellectual differences between Jews and Arabs as offering possible solutions to growing conflicts over labor between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish settlers, especially in government works where the British were forced to intervene.

The need for the British to find such solutions became more pressing as construction of the new deep-water harbor in the port city of Haifa was set to begin in late 1928. The largest government-led construction project since the beginning of British rule, and one of imperial importance, the harbor works promised to be a major employer both during construction and when the harbor began operations.¹⁷⁰ This combination of high profile and promise, made the harbor works a site of particularly potent contestation over employment. Beginning in the fall of 1928, the Histadrut pressured the mandate

¹⁶⁹ Ibrahim was even charged with financing an effort to buy weapons for Palestinian villages near Jewish settlements in response to the armories’ threat. Matthews, *Confronting an Empire*, 94.

¹⁷⁰ Norris, *Land of Progress*, Chapter 3.

authorities to grant fifty percent of positions at the harbor works to Jewish workers. The same Histadrut officials also insisted that Jewish immigrants' supposedly higher standard of living be met by paying them higher wages than their Palestinian peers.¹⁷¹

For British officials seeking a salve for the intensifying competition over employment in government works, of which the Haifa harbor was merely the most prominent example, racial thought offered a possible remedy. Wary of introducing differential wages between Jews and Arabs fulfilling similar duties alongside one another in such a sensitive endeavor as the harbor, some officials, including then High Commissioner, John Chancellor (1870-1952), suggested that the "natural tendencies" of each "race" serve as the basis for the division of labor between Jews and Arabs.¹⁷² What these "tendencies" amounted to, according to Chancellor and others, was Jews' "greater intelligence," and therefore gravitation towards "skilled and semi-skilled labor," as opposed to Arabs, "superior physique," and better fit for "heavy unskilled labor."¹⁷³

Discussions and correspondences between British officials charged with overseeing the harbor's construction are replete with iterations of this distinction. Jews are consistently referred to as physically incapable of certain kinds of "unskilled work," at the same time as they are depicted as possessing "greater intelligence" than their Palestinian peers.¹⁷⁴ The latter, meanwhile, are discussed as "very raw material," suited

¹⁷¹ See the protocols of the meeting between the Officer Administering the Government and the Head of the Department of Public Works, and between representatives of the Histadrut, which the government officially communicated to the English, Arabic, and Hebrew press in Palestine: *The Palestine Bulletin*, October 7, 1928, 2; "*Waq'a 'i' al-Ijtima' fi-Dawa'ir al-Hukuma*", *Filastin*, October 9, 1928, 7; *Davar*, October 10, 1928, 3.

¹⁷² TNA: CO, 733/165/2, 91.

¹⁷³ TNA: CO 733/161/6, 3.

¹⁷⁴ TNA: CO 733/161/6, 3; TNA: CO 733/165/2, 162-163.

for “the commonest kind of labor.”¹⁷⁵ Palestinian’s longer working hours (nine to ten hours a day, as opposed to the eight hours of Jewish workers) explained by “the ‘natural bent’ of the Arab... to work from sunrise to sunset.”¹⁷⁶ The British thus envisioned a division of labor at Haifa which would play to each “race’s” supposed strengths: Palestinians would work in the Athlit Quarry, work which the British regarded as unskilled and reliant primarily on physical strength and tolerance. Jews, meanwhile, would occupy more technical tasks including the operation of heavy machinery and work in modern construction technologies including reinforced concrete and concrete blocks.¹⁷⁷

However, when the British first proposed to divide labor in the Haifa harbor works along racial lines in this manner, Zionist organizations mounted what appeared to be a coordinated effort to oppose it. In mid-February 1929 the Zionist Executive and the Histadrut’s Executive Committee sent memoranda to the Mandate’s Chief Secretary and High Commissioner, respectively, criticizing the proposed arrangement as impractical, unjust, and fundamentally undermining the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.¹⁷⁸ It was impractical, they argued, because unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled

¹⁷⁵ TNA: CO 733/161/6, 72; TNA: CO 733/165/2, 60-61; TNA: CO 733/189/3, 71.

¹⁷⁶ TNA: CO 733/198/6, 78. Such British observations about the tendencies of “the Arab,” were, of course, directly contradicted by British colonial experience with labor struggles in Egypt. Racial assumptions were a convenient pretext for exploitation, even when experienced flew in their face. See: Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); John T. Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

¹⁷⁷ TNA: CO 733/189/3, 65. British discussions of the division of labor in the Haifa harbor works make no reference whatsoever to Mizrahi Jews. Even so, as the introduction has shown, their notions of “natural segregation” in the workforce echo earlier conversations among Zionist settlers about the division of labor between European Jews, Yemeni Jews, and Palestinian Arabs, which placed an emphasis on the “cultured” and technical tendencies of the first, as opposed to the “physicality” of the latter two.

¹⁷⁸ TNA: CO 733/165/2, 100-140.

labor were often difficult to neatly separate and define, and because many forms of skilled labor depended on the products of unskilled laborers. It was unjust to both Jews and Arabs to limit their employment to specific occupations, and particularly unjust towards Jewish workers given the growing preponderance of unskilled and semi-skilled labor in government work. Most importantly, the arrangement fundamentally undermined the establishment of the Jewish National Home – an objective enshrined in the mandate Britain received from the League of Nations in 1923.¹⁷⁹ Such a national home, the Histadrut’s memorandum argued, was dependent on Jewish workers “[undertaking] any kind of work, be it the roughest.” Jews did not

... come to Palestine as to a colony to benefit here by the labour of others. We have no intention of forming a skilled labour aristocracy, by the side of a mass of native labourers to be looked upon as the “hewers of wood and drawers of water.”¹⁸⁰

The threat of becoming a colonial labor aristocracy loomed large over Zionist settlers, particularly over those who viewed themselves as part of a proletarian labor Zionism. Early twentieth-century labor Zionists merged Eastern European socialist and nationalist thought with an expressed disdain towards what they viewed as the exploitative colonial social structure which earlier Zionist settlement and its planter class had engendered.¹⁸¹ The threat was not merely moral or economic. It also had an embodied dimension. If even the “new” Jewish body, forged through labor in Palestine,

¹⁷⁹ TNA: CO 733/165/2, 100-140; For the British Mandate’s ongoing obligation to the establishment of a Jewish national home, see fn. 7 above.

¹⁸⁰ TNA: CO 733/165/2, 117.

¹⁸¹ Shafir, *Land, Labor*, 56-7.

was considered unsuitable, even deficient, for certain forms of physical work, what would this mean for the “new Jew” and the project of national regeneration?

And yet, the rejection of a colonial division of labor was belied by how Zionist penetration into construction and quarrying throughout the Mandate period were frequently discussed and conducted. As noted above, the discourse of Jewish expertise in cement and concrete dovetailed with British racialized attitudes towards labor. Moreover, segregated labor arrangements at Jewish-owned companies such as the Nesher Cement Company – where Jews were employed directly by the company in the factory, and Palestinian Arabs employed by a contractor in the quarry – as well as in projects of the Zionist Palestine Electric Company, were hailed by the British as successful models for precisely such skill-stratification along racial lines.¹⁸²

Indeed, even before the British proposed a racial division of labor at the Haifa harbor, the Palestinian Arab newspaper *Filastin* – whose reporting on the “machine gun or rock breaking machine” controversy was discussed above – criticized the Histadrut’s demands regarding the harbor’s construction as effectively calling for racial discrimination. On October 9, 1928, *Filastin* published an editorial on its first page which bore a remarkable title – “Arab Workers and Jewish Workers: Back to the “White Man’s” Tune – Where Are You, Oh Arab Leaders?” (*‘Umal al-‘Arab wa-‘Umal al-Yahud: ‘Aud ‘ila Naghmat “al-Rajul al-Abyad” – Ayna Antum ya Zu‘ama’ al-‘Arab?*).¹⁸³ The editorial responded to the aforementioned publication of proceedings from the mid-September

¹⁸² TNA: CO 733/165/2, 8. For the history of Palestine’s electrification, see: Meiton, *Electrical Palestine*.

¹⁸³ “*‘Umal al-‘Arab wa-‘Umal al-Yahud: ‘Aud ‘ila Naghmat “al-Rajul al-Abyad” – Ayna Antum ya Zu‘ama’ al-‘Arab?*,” *Filastin*, October 9, 1928, 1.

meeting between Mandate officials and Histadrut representatives regarding the harbor works. In the meeting, the Histadrut presented three conditions regarding the construction of the Haifa harbor – 1) a prohibition on employing foreign labor (a category from which Jewish immigrants were excluded); 2) the enforcement of a fair wages clause, taking into consideration the supposedly higher Jewish standard of living; and 3) the employment of a definite percentage of Jewish workers reflecting the relative Jewish contribution to Palestine’s economy, rather than their significantly smaller share in the population.¹⁸⁴

Filastin’s editorial took no issue with the first condition. This would be to the benefit of both Arabs and Jews. However, its author used the second and third conditions to launch a critique of the concept of a differential “standard of living,” a concept which had become fundamental to the Zionist principle of Hebrew labor and the conquest of labor. *Filastin* argued that behind the argument for higher wages based on the idea of a higher Jewish standard of living, was a thinly veiled request that the government discriminate (*tumayyizu*) between Jewish and Arab workers: the Histadrut was, in fact, appealing to a sense of whiteness and “cultural refinement,” which European Jews supposedly shared with the British.¹⁸⁵

Through a series of rhetorical questions under the subheading “Why this discrimination (*limadha hadha al-tamyiz*)?” the editorial asked whether Jewish laborers showed evidence of being stronger or more perseverant in the face of hardships than Arab laborers, or whether the cultural needs of the Jewish worker justified such a gap in wages since he needed to take “his sweetheart” to “theaters and places of entertainment every

¹⁸⁴ See fn. 171 above.

¹⁸⁵ “‘*Umal al-‘Arab wa-‘Umal al-Yahud*,’ *Filastin*, October 9, 1928, 1.

night?” What the Histadrut was demanding, *Filastin* argued, was a “return to the ‘white man’s’ tune.” That is, “raising [the ‘white man’] over the ‘black man’ in all matters.” In other words, it was a demand that wages be proportional not to workers’ productivity but “to [their] refinement, whiteness of faces, and redness of lips.”¹⁸⁶ If the Histadrut’s tactics were intended to gain benefit from a world ordered according to the “white man’s tune,” Palestinians, the editorial was effectively claiming, were among that unjust world’s black people.

Filastin’s appeal to global discourses of whiteness and blackness in this article reflected a longstanding engagement of the Arabic press and Middle Eastern intellectual circles with questions of race. This engagement was multi-faceted. It included critiques of race-relations in the United States and of colonialism by some, alongside the adoption and adaptation of bio-racism by others. Such modes of thought were not simply wholesale “importations” of Western racial thought but had cultural and social histories of their own in the Middle East and Africa, often intertwined with enslavement and conquest.¹⁸⁷

In this context, Maha Nassar has demonstrated how, beginning in the 1930s, Palestinian Arabic newspapers sympathetically covered the oppression and struggles of Black Americans and the movement of Black solidarity with Ethiopia in the face of the 1935 Italian invasion.¹⁸⁸ It is important to note, however, that at least prior to the 1930s, like other groups able to stake a claim for whiteness at a time when it emerged as what

¹⁸⁶ “‘Umal al-‘Arab wa-‘Umal al-Yahud,” *Filastin*, October 9, 1928, 1.

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, the works cited in fn. 64 above.

¹⁸⁸ Maha Nassar, “Palestinian Engagement with the Black Freedom Movement Prior to 1967,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (August 1, 2019): 17–32.

W.E.B. Du Bois described as a “new religion,” many Palestinians, particularly Christians, were attempting to gain recognition of their own whiteness. This was true in Palestine, in the diaspora, and in Palestinians’ roles as colonial officials.¹⁸⁹ At the same time, many Jews attempted to establish their own pathways to whiteness in the US and Europe, through their own involvement in colonial enterprises, and in Palestine itself.¹⁹⁰

In a period when the “global color line” became an important factor in international politics, the casting of Palestinians as the black victims of British-Jewish white supremacy, as *Filastin*’s 1928 article suggested, was perhaps radical, but not unthinkable.¹⁹¹ The newspaper’s critique of the concept of the standard of living as a device for racial discrimination, presages the insights of historians of the US and Europe who, since the 1990s, have shown that this concept was frequently deployed to allow for racial, class, and gender exclusion from the workforce, or to create and maintain hierarchies within it.¹⁹² That *Filastin*’s casting of Zionist Jews as attempting to benefit

¹⁸⁹ On Du Bois definition of whiteness as a “new religion, see: W. E. B Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk, in W.E.B. Du Bois *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1999 [1920]). On how Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese Arabs negotiated whiteness in a variety of contexts, see: Sarah M. A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Sherene Seikaly, “The Matter of Time,” *The American Historical Review* 124, no. 5 (December 1, 2019): 1681–1688.

¹⁹⁰ On Jews and whiteness, see: Karen Brodtkin, *How Did Jews Become White Folks and What Does That Say about Race in America?* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Eitan Bar-Yosef and Nadia Valman, eds. “The Jew” in *Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Eitan Bar-Yosef, *Villa ba-Jungel (Villa in the Jungle)* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute and ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad, 2013); Tisa Wenger, *Religious Freedom: The Contested History of an American Ideal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

¹⁹¹ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

¹⁹² Lawrence Glickman, “Inventing the ‘American Standard of Living’: Gender, Race and Working-Class Identity, 1880–1925,” *Labor History* 34, no. 2–3 (June 1993): 221–35; Dana Simmons, *Vital Minimum: Need, Science, and Politics in Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 84–88, 131–138; Seikaly, *Men of Capital*. See also: Harold Wolpe,

from the “wages of whiteness”¹⁹³ took place only several years before Nazism would begin its all-out assault on Jews as Europe’s ultimate racial others; that historians of the standard of living have noted how Jews in particular were often considered a threat to or as lying outside the “national standard”;¹⁹⁴ and that within the same article *Filastin* itself resorted to European antisemitic tropes, shows just how volatile and contextually dependent such “obtained” whiteness could be.¹⁹⁵

Learning to Love the Stone

The British suggestion of a racial division of labor in the Haifa harbor works provoked not only Labor Zionism’s broad colonial anxieties, the historical basis of which *Filastin*’s editorial had laid bare. By designating that quarry work specifically be carried out by Palestinian Arabs, it also hit a raw nerve: Zionism’s continuous failure to gain a foothold in Palestine’s stone industry. Throughout the period of British rule, the Zionist “conquest

“Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid,” *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (November 1, 1972): 425–56.

¹⁹³ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2007 [1991]).

¹⁹⁴ Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers*, Chapters 8 & 9.

¹⁹⁵ *Filastin*, 8 October 1928. This volatility calls to mind Eve Troutt Powell’s concept of the “colonized colonizer,” which she uses to explore Egyptian colonization of the Sudan while under British colonial rule, as well as Sherene Seikaly’s exploration of the fragility of Palestinian Christians’s “civilized,” or “white-adjacent” status, when in the service of empire (again in Sudan, in the case of the Palestinian physician Naim Cotran). The category of “colonized colonizer” is useful in dismantling the supposed neat binary between its two components. The realities of Zionist settlement in Palestine under the British Mandate obviously differed immensely from those of colonized Egyptians in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, to the extent that even referring to Zionist settlers in Palestine as “colonized” is problematic. Nonetheless, Zionist understandings of the Mandate period often relied on the “colonizer” and “colonized” binary and conceived of Zionism itself as anti-colonial. This approach is captured in the popular use of the name “The War of Liberation” (*milhemet ha-shiḥrur*) to refer to the 1948 war. Shira Robinson narrates a 1966 meeting between then former Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Israeli Member of the Israeli Knesset, Tawfiq Tubi, in which Ben Gurion crystalized this mode of self-perception, or self-presentation. When Tubi accused Israel of treating its Palestinian citizens, “like ‘natives’,” Robinson writes, Ben Gurion responded by stating that “[u]nder the British we were all ‘natives’.” Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade*; Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*; Seikaly, “The Matter of Time.”

of stone” remained constant, but also consistently elusive. Stone, unlike cement and concrete, where Zionist expertise could be manufactured as if of whole cloth, appeared somehow unruly.

The double meaning of the title of the Even va-Sid (literally “Stone and Lime,” although the company’s English name was Lime and Stone Industries) Company’s company history published in 1984, *Adam Mul Sel’a* – “Man Facing Rock” – encapsulates much of the mythical dimensions of the Zionist conquest of stone.¹⁹⁶ The relationship between Zionism’s new Hebrew man (and to a lesser extent, also its new Hebrew woman) and the stones and rocks of Palestine/Israel is portrayed as at the same time antagonistic and intimate.¹⁹⁷ In this sense, the portrayal echoes the erotic desire for the land which historian Boaz Neumann has described as characteristic of the “pioneers” (*halutzim*) of the second and third waves of Zionist European immigration (in Hebrew

¹⁹⁶ David Faians, *Adam Mul Sel’a : Avnei Derekh le-Orekh Shishim Shenot Yetsirah be-Kibush ha-Even ve-ha-Sid* [Man Facing Rock: Stepping Stones along Sixty Years of Creation in the Conquest of Stone and Lime] (Haifa: Ta’asiyat Even va-Sid, 1984).

¹⁹⁷ The history this dissertation narrates is, at least in part, also the history of the masculinization of wage-base construction labor in Israel/Palestine. During the early twentieth century, Palestinian women were integral to communal construction, particularly in rural locales. As Chapters 4 and 5 show, this remained true to some extent also in construction and quarry work among Palestinian citizens in Israel, where communal building practices, albeit dramatically different in methods, designs, and materials, remained prevalent. Women’s roles in the “Hebrew” construction industry followed a different trajectory. In line with the egalitarian rhetoric of labor Zionism in particular, Jewish women fought to gain a footing in wage-based construction work and road paving. However, despite this egalitarian ethos, they encountered significant gendered barriers and resistance to their participation. Because I focus on construction work as wage labor, these histories of women in construction are largely missing from this dissertation. For a personal account of these struggles, see: Henya M. Pekelman, *Hayei Po’elet ba-Aretz* [The Life of a Worker in her Homeland] (Beer-Sheva: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2007). For a study of women-workers’ struggles to take part in these industries, see: Liat Taub, “Solelet Bonah: Jewish Women-Workers’ Struggle to Participate in the Road-Building and House-Construction in Mandatory Palestine During the 1920s and 1930s,” (MA thesis, University of Haifa, 2019); For some accounts of the role of women in stonework, particularly road paving and the production of gravel, see: Hillel Dan, *be-Derekh lo Selula: Hagadat Solel Boneh* [On an Unpaved Road: The Chronicle of Solel Boneh] (Tel-Aviv: Schocken, 1963), 9-10; ‘Imanu’el Bar-Hayim, *ba-Derekh el Ramat Rahel* [On the Road to Ramat Rahel] (Jerusalem: ha-Sifriya ha-Tziyonit, 1972), 70; Mordechai Ish Shalom, *be-Sod Hotzvim u Vonim: Otobiografiyah* [Among Quarriers and Builders: An Autobiography] (Jerusalem: Agudat “Shalem”, 1989), 109.

'*aliya*, ascendance. Pl. '*aliyot*) to Palestine. This desire gendered the land feminine and often virginal and cast the young Zionists as set to “conquer” and give life to her/it and themselves, through manual labor.¹⁹⁸

A history of the Zionist conquest of stone in Israel/Palestine as a process shaped both by physical labor and political economy, however, reveals multiple other parties instrumental to the enactment of desire Neumann described, unsettling its supposed intimacy. First among these were the Palestinian Arabs, and somewhat less frequently Palestinian and other Middle Eastern Jews, from whom many European Jewish immigrants learned the work in the first place. The history of Zionist apprenticeship to Arab masters in quarrying and stonework reintroduces learning from and imitating Palestinian Arab labor as a pivotal piece in the broader Zionist conquest of land and labor. It also draws together the material and the cultural in these practices of imitation and sheds new light on the phenomena of Jewish and Zionist Orientalism.¹⁹⁹

Scholars have examined Zionist practices of imitating Palestinian Arabs' dress, language and customs in para-military organizations like *Hashomer* (“The Watchman”) and the Hagana (“The Defense”), in the aesthetic practices of photographers and artists, and in the literary and poetic depictions of the pre-state era. However, their emphasis has often been on the role of the Palestinian Arab as a model and vehicle for the negotiation and articulation of Zionist self-perception. These scholars regard the Palestinian Arab, particularly the Bedouin and the *fallah*, and at times also the Palestinian or Middle

¹⁹⁸ Neumann, *Land and Desire*, 95-100.

¹⁹⁹ On Jewish and Zionist Orientalism, see: Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel”; Aziza Khazzoom, “The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel,” *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 4 (2003): 481–510; Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, Chapter 2.

Eastern Jew, primarily as having served a mediatory role in the Zionist cultural imagination, linking the returning European Jews to their Middle Eastern origins, often through the “hybrid” Sephardi Jews.²⁰⁰ A focus on labor processes however demonstrates that this aesthetic and symbolic role was in some cases inseparable from practical considerations. When it came to working on the land, Jewish self-fashioning in light of an Arab model extended beyond the adoption of an aesthetic or habitus, into the realm of fashioning an economically productive body.²⁰¹

Zionist attempts to gain a foothold in Palestine’s stone quarries dated back to the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. However, as in cement production, the most significant efforts to introduce “Hebrew stone” began with the advent of British rule over Palestine.²⁰² The sources of capital invested in setting up Zionist-owned quarries, the structures of the various quarrying firms, and the ways in which labor was organized in

²⁰⁰ Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), esp. Chapter 5. Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), Chapter 2; Israel Bartal, “Kozak u-Vedui: ‘Olam Ha-Dimuyim ha-Le’umi ha-Hadash [Cossack and Bedouin: The New National Imaginary],” in *Kozak U-Vedui: “Am” ve-“Erets” ba-Le’umiyut ha-Yehudit* [Cossack and Bedouin: “Land” and “People” in Jewish Nationalism] (Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘Oved, 2007), 68–79; Yael Zerubavel, “Memory, the Rebirth of the Native, and the ‘Hebrew Bedouin’ Identity,” *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 315–352. Dor Guez, *Oryentalizm Terom-Yisre’eli: Dyokan Metzulam* [Pre-Israeli Orientalism: A Photographic Portrait] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2015).

²⁰¹ Dafna Hirsch’s work on masculinity among Zionist *halutzim* is an exception to the rule. While also preoccupied with the more commonly discussed elements of Zionist mimicry of Arab dress and language, Hirsch is careful to note the embodied aspects of such mimicry and their relationship to labor, as well. Dafna Hirsch and Dana Grosswirth Kachtan, “Is ‘Hegemonic Masculinity’ Hegemonic as Masculinity? Two Israeli Case Studies,” *Men and Masculinities* 21, no. 5 (December 2018), 691–693.

²⁰² In 1921, one Mr. Archavsky – likely the engineer Yitzhak Archavsky – attempted to organize a Palestine Stone Quarries Syndicate, registered in London and funded largely by Jewish-British capital, a structure similar to the Cement Syndicate which eventually spawned the Nesher Portland Cement Company discussed in Chapter 1 above. According to a 1927 report by Nahum Thischby of the Zionist Executive Department of Commerce and Industry, Archavsky initially intended for the Syndicate to quarry in the Athlit area and had hoped to supply stone for the British Haifa harbor project. However, the Syndicate’s plans never came to fruition as it was only able to raise 6000 Egyptian Pounds of the 50,000 it had originally set out to. N.J. Thischby to Harry Sacher, November 22, 1927, Box 12, Folder 1, PEC Collection, NYPL.

them varied: from decidedly capitalist ventures, through the first incarnation of the Histadrut's Solel Boneh contracting company with its allegiance to mainstream labor Zionism, and the collectivist *Gdud Ha-Avoda* ("Labor Brigade"), and finally to the jointly Palestinian-Zionist owned, Even va-Sid, by far the period's most successful effort.

Throughout, the need to learn how to manage, organize and operate a quarry, and how to work in one, was a constant. Few European Jewish settlers had arrived in Palestine with experience in stone quarrying and cutting, or in overseeing a quarry's operations.

Whether "Hebrew stone" was to be achieved by targeted capital investment and the establishment of "Hebrew" quarries and quarrying firms, or by introducing Hebrew labor into existing quarries, the vanguard of stone's Jewish conquerors would first have to learn what the work entailed and how to do it. To this end, management and capital consulted frequently with foreign experts.²⁰³ Workers themselves, meanwhile, found the expertise they required was overwhelmingly local. Archival sources are relatively silent about the need to learn from and emulate Palestinian expertise in the stone industry. However, the memoirs of Jewish quarry workers who learned the craft and others who were involved in the industry during the 1920s are not.

²⁰³ Various companies hired an Italian quarrying expert named Amadeo Morelli multiple times during the 1920s to advise on the establishment and management of new quarries and to assess the performance of existing ones. One quarrying enterprise brought a Mr. Simons, a "well known Jewish quarry expert," from the United States to consult on several initiatives. The Zionist Executive hired L. Green, a British engineer who had previously served in the colonial service in India, to produce reports and inspect Jewish-operated quarrying sites. The German-born Leo Picard, who immigrated to Palestine in 1924 and established the Hebrew University's Department of Geology that same year, was also consulted frequently, as were other immigrant scientists and engineers who made Palestine their home. Tischby to Sacher, November 22, 1927, Box 12, Folder 1, PEC, NYPL; Meeting of the Temporary Committee for the Matters of the Stone Industry – Protocol, June 17, 1925, CZA S9\1810\1; Bar-Hayim, *ba-Derekh el Ramat Rahel*, 88; Ish-Shalom, *be-Sod Hotzvim u-Vonim*, 112.

In some instances, authors gloss over the actual processes of learning the trade or the identities of those it was learned from entirely.²⁰⁴ Other accounts acknowledge the apprenticeship process but leave the masters unmentioned. Zvika Dror's biography of Yitzhak Sadeh (Landsberg) (1890-1952) – later a key figure in the militarization of labor Zionism, but in the early 1920s still a leader of the Labor Brigade and an aspiring quarrier – praises Sadeh's "[understanding] that [quarrying] was a trade that required knowledge and skills." Thus, Dror writes, when the Labor Brigade first engaged in quarrying in the Majdal (Migdal) area north of Tiberias in 1921, Sadeh sent Abrasha Hassin (1900-1976), a key figure in the conquest of stone, and others to "train in a quarry near Haifa."²⁰⁵ While Dror leaves the episode at that, such training most likely meant working in an apprenticeship capacity for Palestinian Arab quarriers. As will be shown below, Jewish settlers who undertook such apprenticeships adopted Palestinian quarriers' repertoire of skills and sensibilities, as well as the Arabic professional lexicon through which they ordered and understood Palestine's quarries and stones.

In his memoirs, Hillel Dan (1900-1969), a long-time head of Solel Boneh, offers one such narrative of apprenticeship. Recalling his first year in Palestine, Dan writes of

²⁰⁴ See for example, David Hacohen's description of how Binyamin Kav-Venaki, who, like Hacohen, was part of the post-World War I wave of Zionist immigration, established himself as a supplier of lime for Solel Boneh in the early 1920s. Kav-Venaki, Hacohen writes, "[produced] lime in the Arab fashion, [working] with them [the Arabs], his brother and three or four other friends who followed him in this trade." Even if Hacohen does not mention it, producing the lime "in the Arab fashion," would have entailed Kav-Venaki and his peers learning such local techniques in the first place. Indeed, when Kav-Venaki's brother, Issar, was interviewed for Even va-Sid's aforementioned company history, *Man Facing Stone*, ten years after Hacohen's memoirs were published, he stated that when they began producing lime on Mount Carmel they had been given guidance by "Arabs who had experience in the work. David Hacohen, *'Et Lesaper* [Time to Tell] (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1974), 44; Faïans, *Adam Mul Sela*, 24. Hacohen's autobiography has also appeared in English. See: David Hacohen, *Time to Tell: An Israeli Life, 1898-1984* (New York, Cornwall Books, 1985).

²⁰⁵ Zvika Dror, *Matzbi le-lo Srara : Sipur-Hayav shel Yitzhak Sadeh, "ha-Zaken"* [A Ruler with no Dominion: the Lifestory of Yitzhak Sadeh] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad, 1996), 72.

the first government contract received by the Ahdut Ha-Avoda (a left-wing Labor Zionist party) Works Office in late 1920. The contract was for paving a road between the city of Tiberias and Samakh (Tzemakh), along the Sea of Galilee.²⁰⁶ Since the British authorities did not recognize political parties like Ahdut Ha-Avoda as contracting bodies, when the Works Office received the tender, the government required that an individual signatory bear responsibility for it. At the time, Dan writes, not one among the Works Office's personnel knew even the names of the materials used in road-paving. The party leadership thus selected one individual, a "sacrificial victim" ("*korban*") [quotation marks in the original], to be the signatory and notified the authorities. However, when the day of signing arrived, the man was nowhere to be found. After several days, concerns as to his fate began mounting. Then,

Just as he had vanished, he suddenly appeared, all glowing and rolling with laughter at the sight of his friends' worried faces. Instead of answering their inquisitive looks, he uttered a long stream of strange words, in a throaty guttural pronunciation.

"Ḥami," he uttered between his teeth. "Ṭobjeh, Maṭbah." We looked at him astonished. "Stick a Lamina in my hand," he roared and waved his arm.²⁰⁷ Only when he saw that we were beginning to question his clarity of mind, he acquiesced to telling his story.

When the role [of signatory] was forced upon him, he went to an Arab contractor in Haifa and asked him to hire him as a quarrier. Only after much

²⁰⁶ Hillel Dan, *be-Derekh lo Selula*, 24-25.

²⁰⁷ Here Dan provides a footnote explaining the meanings of these "strange words", stating they are "Arabic words: 'Ḥami' is a quarried stone which has only had its four corners processed by the stonemason. 'Ṭobjeh,' is a stone which the stonemason left with a convexed face.... 'Maṭbah,' is stone given a rectangular shape by the mason. The face of the 'maṭbah' is flat and has been pierced with small holes for decorative purposes. 'Lamina,' is a quarrying rod." His definitions, and the words themselves, differ slightly from those mentioned in scholarly treatments of local quarrying tools and methods. Omar Hamdan defines *khami* stone (*al-ḥajjar al-khami*) literally as "unprocessed stone" (*al-ḥajar al-ghayr madquq*). The "ṭobjeh" Dan mentions, is "ṭobjeh." A *maṭbah* is a kind of hammer used to create the pierced face of the stone Dan refers to by this name. Finally, the 'lamina', is likely the iron rod named *balamina*, a name Shmuel Avitzur believes is of Italian origins. See: Omar Hamdan, *al-Imara al-Sha'abiyya fi-Filastin* (al-Bireh, Palestine: Markaz al-Turath al-Sha'abi al-Falastini, 1996), 571, 574, 597; Shmuel Avitzur, *Adam va-'Amalo : Atlas le-Toldot Klei 'Avoda u-Mitkane Yitsur be-Erets-Yisra'el* [Man and his Work: A Historical Atlas of Tools and Workshops in the Holy Land] (Jerusalem: Karta, 1976), 126.

pleading did he [the contractor] agree to employ him. Within a few days, the man learned the terms [of the trade] and even etched into his memory work-methods, blasting processes, etc. His daily wages, those of a novice Arab laborer, were not enough even [to pay] for breakfast...

The man's ingenuity worked in our favor. He signed the contract with the British and surprised them with [his] "expertise" [quotation marks in the original].²⁰⁸

Members of the Labor Brigade also recorded narratives of learning the stone trade in the Jerusalem area. In several of these, the apprenticeship narrative is more explicit still, pointing to a specific individual rather than to an unnamed Arab "guide." Dror's biography of Sadeh, and the memoirs of two other members of the brigade, 'Imanu'el Bar-Haim (1902-1974) and Mordechai Ish Shalom (1902-1991), all mention a guide they refer to as Abu Ibrahim. In these sources, Abu Ibrahim is said to have been from one of the Palestinian villages on the western outskirts of Jerusalem: Dror identifies him as

²⁰⁸ Dan, *be-Derekh lo Selula*, 24-25. Dan structures the episode in a manner that seems to follow a pattern of biblical prophetic revelation stories, in accordance with what Robert Alter has called a "type-scene", after Walter Arend's formulation from his 1933 study of Homer. The protagonist, Natan Haruvi, separates from the collective at a moment of distress. He then sets alone on a journey from which he returns with newfound knowledge which remedies the collective's plight. The encounter here, of course, is not with the divine, as in biblical narratives of revelation, but with the nameless Arab contractor, and while in the type-scene it is usually the protagonist who shows reluctance to accepting the divine revelation and mission, here it is the Arab contractor who is reluctant to accept Haruvi as an apprentice. The structure of the narrative nonetheless resembles that of theophany type-scenes, as studied by George Savran. Other components of the story also echo biblical narratives of revelation: Haruvi's journey took him to Haifa, most likely to a quarry on Mount Carmel, which is a location with a rich prophetic history. When Haruvi returns, Dan describes his face as "glowing," a motif which could have been lifted directly from Moses' glowing face as he descended Mount Sinai. Haruvi's appearance to his peers as potentially having lost his clarity of mind and uttering unrecognizable words, the pronunciation of which seems physically out of place ("guttural" and "throaty"), could indicate that Dan was also incorporating other, non-biblical prophecy narratives which include the phenomenon of "speaking in tongues." See: Walter Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, second edition (New York: Basic Books, 2011 [1981]), chapter 3; George Savran, "Theophany as Type Scene," *Prooftexts* 23, no. 2 (2003): 119-49. I thank Steven Weitzman for calling my attention to the concept of the type-scene and Alter and Savran's work

being from Lifta, while Ish-Shalom writes that he was from al-Shaykh Badr, a few kilometers to the southeast.²⁰⁹

According to Dror and Ish Shalom, Sadeh was responsible for recruiting Abu-Ibrahim as a guide for the quarry work at Giv‘at Shaul, just south of Lifta.²¹⁰ Ish Shalom describes Abu Ibrahim as “an excellent quarrier,” and a “craftsman.”²¹¹ For Bar-Haim, who was anxious to become a quarrier but only granted the chance to do so when previous groups of the Brigade left the quarry to pursue better earnings, “[it was] very likely, that without the personality and guidance of Abu Ibrahim, I would not have stuck with this toilsome work [i.e., quarrying] for long.” Work alongside Abu Ibrahim was “a source of pleasure. I learned the trade from him, I learned to know and love the stone and the process of production.”²¹²

²⁰⁹ Bar-Haim, *ba-Derekh el Ramat Rahel*, 47-49; Ish Shalom, *be-Sod Hotzvim u-Vonim*, 104-105; Dror, *Matzbi le-lo Srara*, 81; Yossi Spanier, “Mahtzevot ha-Har, Yozmot le-Hakamat Mahtzavot Even ba-Hityashvut ha-Yehudit Saviv la-Yerushalayim ‘ad Tasha”h” [The Mountain Quarries, Initiatives to Establish Stone Quarries in the Jewish Settlements around Jerusalem before 1948], *Mekhkarei Yehuda ve-Shomron* 20, 137-8. My use of Spanier’s work, published in *Mekhkarei Yehuda ve-Shomron* (Judea and Samaria Research Studies), necessitates some commentary. This publication is a product of the deeply controversial Ariel University in the occupied West Bank. Because it resides outside of Israel’s internationally recognized sovereign territory, the institution was granted university status by Israel’s Ministry of Defense and the IDF, rather than the Ministry of Education and the Council for Higher Education in Israel, which are the accrediting institutions according to Israeli law. Its recognition as a university has been a rallying point for Israeli right-wing attempts to further entrench the occupation of the West Bank. The publication itself, as its use of the name “Judea and Samaria” to refer to the West Bank indicates, is ideologically dedicated to the erasure and elision of Palestinian claims and history in Palestine/Israel. Yet, ironically, precisely because of its focus on geography, topography, and the land itself – a product of its desire to strengthen Zionist claims to rootedness and question Palestinian ones – the works featured in this publication can at times also be used to undermine such historical sleights of hand. By using this article, I by no means condone the journal’s political objectives. Rather, I approach it as a source for a considerably more complex history wherein the Zionist relationship to such aspects of “the land itself” was mediated by Palestinian Arab attachments to it (and to a lesser extent by those of Palestinian and Middle Eastern Jews), by virtue of the latter groups’ indigeneity. Thus even in the most deeply entrenched attempts to erase Palestinian history, the historical dependence of the Zionist project on Palestinian Arabs hides between the lines.

²¹⁰ Dror, *Matzbi le-lo Srara*, 81.

²¹¹ Ish Shalom, *be-Sod Hotzvim u-Vonim*, 104-105.

²¹² Bar-Haim, *ba-Derekh el Ramat Rahel*, 47.

These narratives also dismantle the racialized British idea of quarry work being “simple, brute labor” fit for “unskilled” workers and the “physically superior” Arab rather than for the “greater intelligence” of the Jew. In them, quarrying appears as a craft that required finesse and the development of particular sensibilities, rather than brute force. Both Ish Shalom and Bar-Haim describe Abu Ibrahim’s “hazings” of Jewish quarriers who sought to approach the splitting of stone at the quarry with force alone. Abu Ibrahim would let the novice quarriers exert themselves by swinging the large 13-kilogram hammer again and again, “for a quarter of an hour and more,” and then would approach the stone, take the hammer and with “two-three strikes” would expertly split the slab.²¹³

Part of what Abu Ibrahim imparted on the Jewish quarriers, it seems, was a sense of intimate knowing. Ish Shalom’s descriptions of this process of learning to know the stone is particularly rich in its sensory and emotional content. “It took time before we too learned to listen to the sounds emerging from the stone. To feel where the crack is revealed in it, and to hit it in the right place,” Ish Shalom writes. Like Bar-Haim, he too describes “growing attached to the stone and the rock. [Learning] to love them and the work with them.” More than half a century later – at a time when, Ish Shalom writes,

²¹³ Bar-Haim, *ba-Derekh el Ramat Rahel*, 48; Ish Shalom, *be-Sod Hotzvim u-Vonim*, 104-105. Their recorded respect of Abu Ibrahim’s craftsmanship aside, it is interesting to note that both Ish Shalom and Bar-Haim comment on Abu Ibrahim’s supposedly lacking computational and measurement skills. In works which required precise measurements and calculations, both write, the Palestinian craftsman had to turn to his Jewish apprentices. While impossible to rule out entirely that the two provide an accurate description of Abu Ibrahim’s personal limitations, this emphasis does call to mind the widely accepted devaluation of the intelligence of Palestinian Arab workers which has been discussed above. Dror’s description of Abu Ibrahim’s expertise and role accords even more closely with such dismissive depictions, contradicting how Ish Shalom and Bar-Haim depict the Palestinian quarrier. Dror writes that Abu Ibrahim’s contribution was “limited,” due to the “simple work methods” he used, and his “[difficulty] to understand [the motives of the members of the Brigade].” Dror, *Matzbi le-lo Srara*, 81.

“there is no [no longer any] Jewish quarrier nor Jewish stonemason” – he portrays his relationship with the quarry’s stones as more than merely an interaction with inanimate objects,

When you work in the quarry, you learn that the stone has sounds and colors, and the rock has tendons and arteries. You face a rock, but in truth it is as if it were alive before you. You remove its outer shell with the *shakuf* [a Hebrew mispronunciation of the Arabic *shakush*], and you notice [the stone’s] geological composition. When you are familiar with the division of a slab, it is easier to split. When you hit a stone according to the tendons and arteries, it responds to you and splits with great ease.

...There is light gray stone, and dark gray. There is reddish stone, and yellowish stone, and there are stones in which there is a combination of colors. Each kind of stone has its own sound. When you strike a *mizi yahudi* stone you hear a distinct sound, while the voice of the soft stone is dull and thin.²¹⁴

And yet, the voices of the stone were not the only ones Ish Shalom heard in the quarry which had left a lasting impression on him. In the introduction to his memoirs, which he titles “Opening in Two Voices,” as though it were a musical piece, he casts the voices of Abu Ibrahim and his wife Fatima, in the titular role. Ish Shalom mentions that Abu Ibrahim guided the Brigade’s quarrying group, however the focus of the introduction is not on the craftsman’s professional skills, of which the reader learns later in the memoirs. Rather it is on how Abu Ibrahim and Fatima’s interactions shaped Ish Shalom’s perception of himself within Palestine’s landscape.

As Abu Ibrahim and Fatima engaged in a call-and-response conversation between Giv’at Shaul and al-Shaykh Badr (which Ish Shalom explains he could not understand,

²¹⁴ Ish Shalom, *be-Sod Hotsvim u-Vonim* 105. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s study-come-meditation on stone in medieval literature indicates that such relationships with stone have a long history and are not limited to those working in stone directly. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2015).

since he did not speak Arabic) covering the aerial distance with their voices, Ish Shalom “confronted in a very tangible manner, what awaited us here, in Eretz Yisrael, in Jerusalem.” He recalls first fully perceiving the “wilderness” (*ha-shmama*) of the land and the need to “quarry stones from the mountains of Jerusalem and to build the city with them,” through the “cry of the wilderness (*ze‘akat ha-shmama*) that came to [his] ears in Abu Ibrahim’s and Fatima’s voices.”²¹⁵ Ish Shalom repeatedly emphasizes how unlikely it was that this mundane vocal exchange had such a momentous impact on him. The story he weaves around the exchange neatly encompasses foundational Zionist tropes of “making the wilderness bloom”, “redeeming the land” and building it. However, a single sentence, one which appears somewhat out of place in this overarching narrative, might perhaps offer a better indication of why the exchange was so formative. The vocal exchange between the village and the quarry, between husband and wife, demonstrates Ish Shalom’s realization that the life-long “quest” his memoir narrates entailed dislodging more than stones from the land around him, but also people: “The two [Fatima and Abu Ibrahim] shouted to each other in high voices, because they are the masters of [this] space and [this] wilderness, and they are their proprietors.”²¹⁶

²¹⁵ The idea of Palestine as a wilderness or wasteland – *shmama* – has, of course had an important role in justifying the Zionist project of “building the land,” mentioned above. See: Alan George, “Making the Desert Bloom: A Myth Examined,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8, no. 2 (1979): 88–100; Haim Gerber, “Zionism, Orientalism, and the Palestinians,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 1 (October 1, 2003): 23–41; Sandra M. Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920-1947* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). For an examination of how the image of Palestine/Israel’s “wilderness,” has shaped North American concepts of the “wilderness,” see: W. J. T. Mitchell, “Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 193–223.

²¹⁶ Ish Shalom, *be-Sod Hotzvim u-Vonim*, 13-15.

Bodies and Machines

If the Zionist conquest of stone was intended to obtain a significant hold over Palestine's quarries and stone resources, the approach adopted by the Labor Brigade – training under local masters and adapting local methods – very quickly proved to be insufficient.

Beginning in the early 1920s, a succession of local committees and foreign experts proposed a broad range of alternative strategies.²¹⁷ Eventually, one idea took hold – viable “Hebrew stone” would necessitate the widescale mechanization of quarry work.

At the heart of this idea - promoted most decisively by Director of the Commerce and Industry Department of the Zionist Executive, Nahum Thischby (1885-1952) – was an economic calculus. Not only was the cost of Jewish labor considerably higher than Palestinian Arab labor, the productivity of Jewish workers was frequently lower. While members of the Labor Brigade initially opposed “revolutionizing” quarries through mechanization, by 1927 Thischby could somewhat triumphantly offer a retrospective evaluation, stating that

As competition with the Arabs by working by hand is out of the question, modern machinery ought to have been introduced, and should continue to be introduced in the future.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ On the foreign experts involved in the conquest of stone, see fn. 203 above. In late 1923, the Histadrut established a “Quarry Committee,” which called for the strategic purchase of land and the pooling of institutional resources to fund equipment and subsidize workers in training. In 1925, several Zionist institutions founded a “Temporary Committee for the Matters of the Stone Industry,” which included representatives of the Histadrut’s “Quarry Committee,” officials from the Palestine Zionist Executive, the Jewish National Fund, and other Zionist organizations. Its members debated whether successful competition with Palestinian Arab quarries could perhaps be achieved by the “Hebrew” stone industry facing outward and producing for export, relying also on the aura of stones from the Holy Land and on the “national feelings” of Jews elsewhere. Exporting Palestinian stone, specifically for gravestones, was considered one potentially lucrative avenue. CZA S9\1760\1; Folder 1, Box 12, PEC Collection, NYPL.

²¹⁸ N.J. Thischby to Harry Sacher, November 22, 1927, Box 12, Folder 1, PEC Collection, NYPL.

The increased productivity of quarries that utilized “labor-saving machinery” including excavators, drills, and jackhammers, it was thought, would ameliorate the deficiencies of the Jewish body and the higher cost of Jewish labor. This would allow for the development of a strong Hebrew stone industry, permitting private and public firms to open new quarries. At the same time, mechanization of existing quarries would permit the displacement of Palestinian workers and expertise there.²¹⁹

Discussed at the industry-wide level, the economic language of “competition,” “cost,” and “productivity” could make quarry mechanization appear like a somewhat abstract proposition. However, when these discussions focused on the workings of specific quarries, the fundamental idea – that mechanization would allow the displacement of Palestinian workers and expertise – became more evident. For example, a laudatory article published in the September 1925 issue of the Kibbutz ‘Ein Harod’s journal *Mi-Befnim* (“From Inside”), narrated the difficult beginnings of Jewish labor in the local quarry several years prior, its development, and its future. The article accorded a prominent obstructive role to “the Arab expert” (*ha-mumḥe ha-‘aravi*) employed in the quarry, whose high salary, according to the article, had proved burdensome. The expected arrival of a compressor-powered drill, however, it was hoped, would both increase productivity and reduce costs, since “it will [then] be possible to let the Arab expert go.”²²⁰

The quarry at the Nesher factory is another case in point. As mentioned in Chapter One, Nesher was a “mixed” workplace, with Jewish employees working in the

²¹⁹ N.J. Thischby to Harry Sacher, November 22, 1927, Box 12, Folder 1, PEC Collection, NYPL.

²²⁰ “*Mahtzevat ‘Ein Harod*” [The ‘Ein Harod Quarry], *Mi-Befnim* 2, no. 16, September 1, 1925.

factory and Palestinian Arabs in the company quarry. It was also the site of some of the Mandate periods most substantial cross-communal labor organization efforts.²²¹

However, many among the factory's Jewish workers and the Histadrut leadership, maintained throughout that labor in the quarry should be "Hebrew" as well. For over a decade since the factory began operations and until 1936, when the Solel Boneh contracting company's leadership was able to force his hand to "integrate" the quarries, Nesher's founder, Michael Pollak, withstood Histadrut and workers' pressures by repeatedly promising that Nesher would transition to "full Hebrew labour" as soon as the quarry was mechanized to allow it.²²² "When [the machines] arrive," became a repeatedly deferred moment of promise. Pollak and other members of Nesher's management announced time and time again that such an "arrival" was imminent, only to have it dissipate shortly thereafter.²²³

Over time, Jewish workers at Nesher and Histadrut officials seemed to internalize this conditional relationship. In September 1933, rumors began spreading among the factory's workers that as part of a factory expansion, management would finally mechanize work in the quarry. In a September 29 letter to the Histadrut's Executive Committee, the Secretary of Nesher's Workers Council described "a stir" (*tesisa*) among the Jewish workers. The workers, he reported, were urging the Council demand that management introduce Jews into quarry work following mechanization. A note scribbled

²²¹ See fn. 87 above.

²²² De Vries, "Ma'avakei 'Avoda u-Samkhut"; Bernstein, "Yehudim ve-'Aravim be-Mif'al 'Nesher'." For Pollak's reasoning behind the decision see also Chapter 1, 53, fn. 93 above.

²²³ Y. Marminski, "Report on my Activities at Nesher," September 17, 1929, LMA, IV-208-1-258A.

on the letter, likely by a member of the Executive Committee, suggested that if there was any chance of success, it would be worthwhile to do so.²²⁴

The letter also revealed an accompanying assumption. Mechanization and “rationalization” of the quarry – the two terms were often bundled together in discussions of the conquest of stone – were antithetical to the continued employment of Palestinians there. Prior to August 1933, the letter noted, when partnership between Jewish and Palestinian organized labor at Nesher finally dissolved, Nesher’s Jewish workers could not support quarry mechanization and rationalization wholeheartedly since “[these] would have considerably pushed the hands of the Arab workers away from the quarry.”²²⁵ Palestinian workers, it was assumed, had little place in a “modern” industrial workplace. Here too, a racialized hierarchy of skill emerged.

Once deemed plausible, such hierarchies were to be protected. When in December 1933 reports described additional steps towards the mechanization of Nesher’s quarry, including the training of Palestinian workers on the new machinery, the local Jewish Workers’ Council reacted furiously. In a December 5, 1933 letter to the Histadrut’s Executive Committee, the Council reported that workers demanded that factory management halt the introduction of new machinery until Michael Pollak returned from a trip abroad. When he did, the workers intended to press him on his promise that mechanized quarrying would be carried out only by Jewish workers. The Histadrut’s Executive Committee responded within a week. They supported the workers’ demands,

²²⁴ Tzvi Grinberg to the Histadrut Executive Committee, September 29, 1933, LMA, IV-208-1-894.

²²⁵ Tzvi Grinberg to the Histadrut Executive Committee, September 29, 1933, LMA, IV-208-1-894.

specifically calling on them to resist attempts to force Jewish employees to train Palestinian workers on the machinery.²²⁶

Unsurprisingly, the voices of the Palestinian workers that quarry mechanization was intended to displace, or any other Palestinian voices for that matter, are absent from these intra-Zionist discussions. This does not mean, however, that similar questions of the costs and benefits of mechanization – extending well beyond the specific instance of quarry work – did not figure in Palestinian thinking about the nexus of political economy, labor, and development. The leading article in the November 15, 1935 issue of *al-'Iqtisadiyyat al-'Arabiyya* (translated by its editors as *The Arabic Economic Journal*, or sometimes, *The Arab Economic Journal*) – a journal Sherene Seikaly has identified as the primary organ of Palestine’s “men of capital” – provides a glimpse of a different approach to the relationship between mechanization, labor, and “progress.”²²⁷

The article, titled “Labor Versus Machinery in the Near East,” warns against the adoption of the “common fallacy” of exaggerating the dependence of production efficiency on mechanization and the “corollary” argument that “economic progress is impossible without mechanization.” Pointing to the problem of “technological unemployment” elsewhere, the article’s author, Edward F. Nickoley (1873-1937), an American Professor of Economics and the longtime Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the American University of Beirut, suggests that the emergence of this problem has allowed a “more balanced... attitude” to supplant the “traditional faith in the machine as the saviour of the race.” One important outgrowth of this “more balanced

²²⁶ Tzvi Grinberg to the Histadrut Executive Committee, December 5, 1933, LMA, IV-208-1-894.

²²⁷ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, Chapter 1.

attitude,” Nickoley suggests, is a growing recognition of the need to make a clearer distinction between machinery that “cooperates with labor,” and between machinery which competes with labor. This distinction, according to Nickoley, reveals that the benefits of mechanization are not absolute, and that the specific form mechanization should take is always context dependent.²²⁸

In the case of the Near East, an “indiscriminate demand” to introduce machinery as a condition for progress, Nickoley argues, fails to consider local conditions. Although the Near East’s countries may not possess abundant natural resources, and suffer from “unduly timid” capital, they enjoy “an excessive supply not only of unskilled labor but of labor with high potentialities of technical efficiency.” Introducing labor-saving or substituting machinery would only “accentuate a condition which is already critical... inadequate opportunity for the labor which exists.” “Progress” in the Near East, Nickoley claims, could only be brought forth by providing “effective training and intelligent direction of the quantitative and qualitative potentialities” of its inhabitants.²²⁹

Al-Iqtisadiyyat first included Nickoley’s article in a special English and French language issue of the journal. Two months later, in the journals’ January 25, 1936 issue, the editors included the article again, this time translated into Arabic.²³⁰ In keeping with the editorial line of the journal which “conceptualiz[ed] economy... as discrete from the political,”²³¹ Nickoley does not mention colonialism, Jewish settlement in Palestine, or

²²⁸ Dr. E.F. Nickoley, “Labor Versus Machinery in the Near East,” *al-‘Iqtisadiyyat al-‘Arabiyya* 1, no. 22 (November 15, 1935): 3-4.

²²⁹ Nickoley, “Labor Versus Machinery.”

²³⁰ E.F. Nickoley, “*al-‘Umal ‘Iza’a al-Alat fi-l-Buldan al-Sharqiyya*,” *al-‘Iqtisadiyyat al-‘Arabiyya* 2, no. 4: 5-6.

²³¹ Seikaly, *Men of Capital*, 33.

Zionism in his article. In accordance with *al-'Iqtisadiyyat*'s editorial line, he writes of the matter at hand from an approach that seems to aspire toward separating the economic from the political. Nonetheless, it is instructive to read his suggestions, which, given the venue, had likely struck a chord with at least some of Palestine's capitalist class, against the backdrop of the Zionist embrace of quarry mechanization. Equally as rooted in the economic language of "efficiency," "costs," and "productivity" as his Zionist counterparts, Nickoley prescribes a different vision. He saw imminent danger in indiscriminate mechanization's capacity to replace, deskill, and eventually displace indigenous populations in the Middle East, precisely the qualities which made machinery so appealing to its promoters in the Zionist conquest of stone.²³²

Conclusion: "Soon They Will Be Firing the Arab"

When finally, Jewish workers were introduced into Nesher's quarry in 1936, it was due not to mechanization but to the 1936-1939 Palestinian Great Revolt, and the incessant pressures of the Histadrut and its contracting company Solel Boneh on Pollak. At first the quarry became a "mixed" workplace, with Jews and Arabs working alongside one another. Solel Boneh's David Hacohen (1898-1984), who had previously established a partnership with Tahir Qaraman at Even va-Sid, and the Palestine Arab Workers Society's Sami Taha, were the architects of this first stage of the quarry's transformation. Then, by the late 1938, the quarry transitioned to exclusively Jewish labor.²³³

²³² It was, in fact, precisely the sort of "labor-saving machinery" Nickoley warned against, that the architects of Zionism's quarry mechanization efforts had argued for. N.J. Thischby to Harry Sacher, November 22, 1927, Box 12, Folder 1, PEC Collection, NYPL.

²³³ Hacohen, *'Et Lesaper*, 65-68; Bernstein, "Yehudim ve- 'Aravim," 103.

With the transition to exclusively Jewish labor, mechanization was in fact soon to follow. However, it soon proved to be a fickle ally of labor. By 1942, Nesher's now wholly Jewish quarrying workforce found themselves and the company's management on the opposite sides of the quarry mechanization debate. Fearful of losing their jobs, the Nesher Workers' Council fought against management's plans to introduce a new excavator to a recently opened quarry face. This time, however, they did not receive the Histadrut's backing. Rather, the Histadrut's Executive Committee issued a letter to the Workers' Council stating that

Theoretical assumptions and experience – both prove that there is no basis for the workers to resist the expansion of machinery use [in the quarry]. The machine has been and still is one of the central means for the Jewish worker to expand and solidify his standing, to improve his working conditions, and to increase the work itself.²³⁴

And what of the question with which this chapter began? The question which for a short while in 1931 vexed people not just in Haifa and Mandate Palestine, but also in Beirut, Cairo, London, and New York: machine gun or rock breaking machine? The histories of the construction of the Haifa Harbor and its Athlit quarry and of the Zionist “conquest of stone” more broadly, demonstrate that the line separating these two machines could be finer than we might otherwise assume. The “weaponization” of the quarry drill – making it into a device for Palestinian displacement – was tied to racial hierarchies of different bodies, their laboring capacities and needs, and their relationships to their environment, technology, and modernity writ large. These racialized

²³⁴ Histadrut Executive Committee to Solel Boneh Directorate, Haifa and the Nesher Workers' Council, June 18, 1942, LMA, IV-208-1-2363C.

understandings also placed mandate Palestine along the emergent global color line of the 1920s and 30s, connecting local struggles to transnational and imperial frameworks. At the same time, Mandate Palestine's construction sites and quarries were locations where other seemingly obvious separations could be challenged as well. There Eastern European Jewish settlers learned they would need to adopt Palestinian sensibilities, knowledge, and bodily comportment, and that the displacement of Palestinian expertise, and Palestinians, remained difficult because of the Zionist project's dependence on them.

That did not mean however, that other strategies of displacement could not be explored. One such strategy, already explored as early as the 1911 Yavnieli Mission, was to look for more suitable Jewish bodies to serve as replacements.²³⁵ In a 1945 report on the economic feasibility of employing Jewish labor in "primitive lime kilns" as part of the production process, Dr. Ludwig Grünbaum, uses the Even va-Sid lime kiln at Shfeya as a case in point.²³⁶ There, utilizing Yemeni Jewish workers, the prospect of "full Hebrew labor" seemed closer than ever. The clause in Grünbaum's report titled "Arab Labor in Shfeya", reads as follows:

"I went over the list of workers, I visited Shfeya, and I talked with some workers. From the evidence, I learned that there is only one Arab in the factory, who is teaching the craft to the Jewish workers. Soon they will be firing the Arab."²³⁷

²³⁵ See Introduction above.

²³⁶ The role which Grünbaum, who would later change his name to Aryeh Ga'aton, played in the planning of labor in the proposed Jewish state, after the United Nation's Special Committee on Palestine issued its recommendation for partition in Fall 1947, is discussed at length in the following chapter.

²³⁷ L. Grünbaum, "Report on the Possibility of Hebrew Labor in Primitive Lime Kilns," February 13, 1945, CZA S9/2274

CHAPTER 3: “IF WE ARE A FORCE”: CONSIDERING COERCION AND APPEARANCES IN THE DIVISION OF LABOR

Of all the years and events which have cast their long shadows on the modern history of Palestine/Israel – 1917 and the Balfour declaration, the violence of summer 1929, 1936-1939’s Great Revolt, and 1967’s Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip – none has loomed larger than 1948. In many ways a shorthand for a sequence of events which spanned the years 1947-1949, 1948 is etched in Palestinian history and memory as the year of the Palestinian catastrophe, the Nakba. In Zionist history and memory, it marks the year of Israeli independence. The year has also come to define one of the primary and longest lasting divisions among Palestinians: that between the roughly 750,000 Palestinians forced to leave their homes in what became Israel and who became refugees, and the roughly 150,000 Palestinians who were able to remain in the boundaries of the new state, or returned in the years immediately following. To the latter, it gave an enduring name: “’48 Arabs” (*‘arab tamaniyah wa-’arba ‘in*).²³⁸

The events of 1948 are rightly recognized as a watershed. This recognition of their transformative nature has, however, led to substantive continuities between what

²³⁸ I borrow the evocative imagery of the shadows certain years have cast on Palestine/Israel’s history from the concept for the 2018 New Directions in Palestinian Studies Workshop at Brown University, which was titled “The Shadow Years: Material Histories of Everyday Life.” On the terminology “’48 Arabs,” and other terms which refer to Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, such as *‘Arab al-dakhil* (“Arabs of the inside”), see: Dan Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu-Baker, *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (University of California Press, 2005), 59.

preceded these events and what followed frequently being overlooked in the scholarship. Such oversights have been perhaps most pronounced when it comes to examining how colonial structures, which were in place under the British Mandate, evolved in post-1948 Israel. Several important works have examined the role of these colonial legacies. Scholarship by Shira Robinson, Yael Berda, and Leena Dallasheh, among others, has demonstrated how colonial practices and logic shaped the relationship between the nascent Israeli state and Palestinian citizens in it, particularly in relation to the legal, political, and social dimensions of citizenship and rights.²³⁹ Cultural studies of Mizrahi Jews, or more specifically, Arab Jews – a nomenclature some of the field’s leading scholars argue for on historical, cultural, and political grounds – pioneered by Ella Shohat and taken up by scholars like Aziza Khazzoom and Yehouda Shenhav, have emphasized how colonial and orientalist cultural hierarchies impacted Mizrahim’s “absorption” in Israeli society.²⁴⁰ This chapter extends the pathways paved by these inquiries to examine how ideas and policy suggestions the Zionist leadership considered before and during 1948’s upheavals, laid the groundwork for the Israeli state’s division of labor. I show that as the Yishuv moved towards what its leaders would no doubt consider “post-colonial” statehood, even if only in temporal terms, these ideas and policy suggestions remained firmly rooted in the racialized divisions of colonialism and empire.

²³⁹ Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*; Berda, “Colonial Legacy”; Leena Dallasheh, “Troubled Waters: Citizenship and Colonial Zionism in Nazareth,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 3 (August 2015): 467–87; Leena Dallasheh, “Persevering through Colonial Transition: Nazareth’s Palestinian Residents after 1948,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45, no. 2 (February 1, 2016): 8–23. In a somewhat different vein, see: Lana Tatour, “Citizenship as Domination: Settler Colonialism and the Making of Palestinian Citizenship in Israel,” *Arab Studies Journal* XXVII, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 8–39.

²⁴⁰ Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel”; Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*; Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries*.

The chapter relies on minutes of Histadrut Executive Committee Meetings, social scientific studies produced during the 1940s, and the records of the Yishuv Emergency Committee (*Va'adat ha-Matzav*, lit. “the situation committee”), established following the UNSCOP partition proposal in late 1947, to plan the administration of the future Jewish state. In this respect, the chapter is unique among this dissertation’s chapters. Because it focuses on Zionist perceptions and ideas about divisions of labor, race, economy, and the labor market, it relies almost entirely on Zionist or Hebrew sources.

This focus on Zionist discourses allows the chapter to also address a conceptual matter, providing a second related axis along which I trace continuities between Mandatory Palestine and the history of post-1948 Palestine/Israel: the question of Zionism’s dependence on coercive power. In his critique of Gershon Shafir’s classic study, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*, Zachary Lockman calls attention to the overlooked role coercion played in “reali[zing] Zionism’s goals,” even prior to 1948. This elision occurs in part, because until 1948 the levers of coercive state power were unavailable to the Zionist leadership directly. As Lockman points out, while some coercive tools were available to the labor Zionist movement in its struggle for Hebrew labor during this period, until at least the mid-1940s the movement relied primarily on the coercive state action of the British to advance its objectives in Palestine.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Zachary Lockman, “Land, Labor and the Logic of Zionism: A Critical Engagement with Gershon Shafir,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 2012): 9–38. As a foil for his critique, Lockman analyzes a 1927 text by labor Zionist leader Hayyim Arlosoroff about the question of joint Jewish-Arab organization. In the text, Arlosoroff sought cases elsewhere with which the situation of labor Zionism in Palestine could be usefully compared. Searching specifically for cases in which similar mass settlement

Since the British did relatively little to interfere in Palestine's labor market, the struggle for Hebrew labor could be won in earnest only after the foundation of Israel, when the state apparatus was firmly in the hands of the labor Zionist leadership (and, as Lockman notes, also as a result of the Nakba and the "radical transformation" of the land's demography).²⁴² This did not mean, however, that when conceiving of the labor market, the labor Zionist leadership and its institutions did not give such coercive power consideration. As Lockman shows in his analysis of a 1927 text by labor Zionist leader, Hayyim Arlosoroff (1899-1933), regardless of whether someone like Arlosoroff approved of such coercive measures, he saw the necessary power to enact them as decisively out of reach. The minutes of the Histadrut Executive Committee meeting I examine in the chapter's first section, suggest that by 1942 some in the labor Zionist leadership had begun to reconsider this assessment. The sources used in the second and third sections of the chapter then provide an opportunity to examine how Zionist leaders (including those beyond the labor Zionist milieu) and experts viewed the use of coercion

efforts in a "country with low a wage level," by a people "with a European standard of needs," were pursued "without using coercive means," he came up short. The only truly comparable example Arlosoroff could find was, in fact, the South African one, where state coercion through legislation was the primary means for sustaining white workers' "European" standards. Without addressing the morality of the steps taken by the South African state to protect white workers, Arlosoroff conceded that the toolset of state coercion South Africa employed was entirely out of labor Zionist's reach in Palestine. However, since starting conditions in South Africa were similar, labor Zionism had no choice but to pursue a policy akin to that which eventually became euphemistically called "separate development." As this chapter demonstrates, when the prospect of state power became arguably more tangible, labor Zionist leaders continued to consider the South African model, alongside other colonial models of labor market organization.

²⁴² Lockman, "Land, Labor, and the Logic," 28. Here Lockman relies on the work of Michael Shalev on the Histadrut. Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy*, 34-42.

in organizing the labor market when explicitly tasked with “seeing like a state,” following UNSCOP’s partition recommendation in late 1947.²⁴³

The chapter’s first two sections demonstrate that by the early 1940s, as some in the Labor Zionist leadership warned of the demise of the Hebrew construction worker, discussions of the dangers of a colonial division of labor, first explored in the previous chapter, shifted in tone. Using the minutes of a 1942 meeting of the Histadrut’s Executive Committee and Solel Boneh’s leadership regarding construction work undertaken for the British (and American) war efforts, I show that although some Labor Zionist leaders held onto the question of whether such a division was morally justifiable, different questions altogether animated much of the discussion. Rather than framing the question as primarily one of morality and self-perception, they asked whether it was politically

²⁴³ As the third section of this chapter demonstrates, some of the experts which the subcommittee in charge of planning the future Jewish state’s Ministry of Labor enlisted, were in many ways products of and participants in some of the key moments and movements in the twentieth-century history of expertise and social-scientific authority. A.L. Grünbaum (Ga’aton), was a pioneer of the “national income accounting” which Timothy Mitchell has identified as pivotal in what he terms the “birth of the economy,” as well as the author of multi-year economic plans for the Israeli state after its establishment. Alfred Bonne, in turn, while an economic historian by training, dedicated much of his career to researching and writing about development economics. Both were products of post-World War I German academia and emblematic of the period of “twentieth century high modernism” which James C. Scott locates at the heart of his *Seeing Like a State*. Indeed, in making the case for the necessity of his four-year plan for Israel’s economy and the absorption of immigration, issued in 1950, Grünbaum repeatedly refers to the example of Walter Rathenau’s planning work as Germany’s Head of the Office of War Raw Materials during World War I. In *Seeing Like a State*, Scott identifies – even if with some trepidation as to the utility of the exercise – Rathenau and his plans for German mobilization as the “particular time, place, and individual,” in which twentieth-century high modernism was “born.” ISA-PMO-PMO-000d1o6; J. R., “Professor A. Bonne,” *ha-Riv’on le-Kalkala*, no. 25/26 (1960): 3–4; E. Kleiman, “A.L. Ga’aton and His Doctrine: His Contribution to Economic Research in Israel,” *ha-Riv’on le-Kalkala*, no. 124 (1985): 41–46; Timothy Mitchell, “Fixing the Economy,” *Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (1998): 82–101; James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven.: Yale University Press, 1999), 97–8; Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). On Grünbaum’s pivotal role in developing national income accounting through his study of the Jewish economy as a separate national economy in Mandate Palestine, see: Colin Danby, *The Known Economy: Romantics, Rationalists, and the Making of a World Scale* (London: Routledge, 2017), 40–42, 46–7, fn. 12.

possible for the Labor Zionist movement to adopt such a division of labor and what would the ramifications of instituting such a colonial division of labor in Histadrut-led works be? Underlying these questions were concerns about the unfolding catastrophe of the Holocaust – the dimensions of which were not yet widely known – but also about the Zionist enterprise’s coercive power and international standing, and the visibility of racialized colonial divisions of labor.

The third and fourth sections then fast-forward to September 1947, when, following the publication of UNSCOP’s recommendation for partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, the Zionist leadership established an Emergency Committee tasked with planning the administration of the future Jewish state. Following similar themes as the first two sections, these sections focus on how the future state’s “Arab labor question” was discussed in meetings and plans which experts proposed to the subcommittee charged with devising the future state’s Ministry of Labor.

“The Lowest Rung”

As noted in Chapter 1, during World War II Palestine became Britain’s second-largest military base in the Middle East, industrializing rapidly to meet British military needs. The central role of Palestinian construction workers in wartime construction projects, including those of the Histadrut’s own contracting and construction companies, raised concerns among Histadrut officials that Palestinians were gaining access to skills and expertise intended to set Jewish workers above and apart from them. Maintaining exclusive claims to modern technical expertise and knowhow, was, as the previous

chapters have shown, one tool through which labor Zionist institutions and workers pursued the conquest of labor in the construction industry. In a Histadrut Executive Committee meeting on 15 April 1942, these developments led Berl Repetur (1902-1989) of the Work Center (*Merkaz ha-'Avoda*), and its longtime representative in Solel Boneh's management, to ask whether, "it was already possible to carry out large works without the skilled Jewish worker?"²⁴⁴ Noting the dwindling and aging of the population of Jewish construction workers, Repetur decried the dangers that would face the "last remains" of Jewish construction workers when the war ended. David Remez (1886-1951), the Histadrut's Secretary General, explained that Jewish construction workers had in practice been on the lowest rung of the project of "building the land" for some time. With no security, and "after... years of trouble, of unemployment and of illness," they would do anything to escape construction work.²⁴⁵

Repetur and Remez's assessments of the state of Hebrew labor in the construction industry in the early 1940s appear to have been accurate. The industry's heavy reliance

²⁴⁴ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C. The Construction Workers' Association publication, *In Years of Emergency (The "Camps" 1937-1947)*, provides a similar assessment of the growing preponderance of skilled Palestinian construction workers in the military construction projects during WWII, in a piece written by one L. Kantor. As with most of the material in the volume, Kantor's piece is an excerpt from an earlier publication. His was published in MAPAI's *le-Ahdut ha-'Avoda* anthology series in 1944. Eliyahu Biletzki, ed., *Be-Shnot Herum: ha-"Kampim" 1937-1947* [In Years of Emergency: The "Camps" 1937-1947] (Tel Aviv: Histadrut Po'alei ha-Binyan, 1956), 110-1. The Histadrut established its Work Center in 1927, immediately after the first incarnation of Solel Boneh declared bankruptcy. The Center's role was to step into the vacuum left by Solel Boneh and serve as a contracting body, primarily as a stop gap in the face of Jewish unemployment. When Solel Boneh was re-established in 1935, the Work Center continued to operate as the representative of Histadrut members employed by Solel Boneh and elsewhere. Repetur was a member of the Center's managements since its establishment. Ya'akov Goren, *Berl Repetur: Hazon be-Ma'aseh ha-Yom-Yom* [Berl Repetur: Vision in Everyday Life] (Ramat Ef'al: Yad Tabenkin, 1995).

²⁴⁵ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C.

on “unskilled” temporary labor had, by the late 1930s, transformed it into an immigrant absorbing industry in which many Jewish immigrants found their first jobs in Palestine. More established settlers, especially the small but growing group of second-generation Zionist settlers, meanwhile, tended to gravitate towards industries such as metalwork, printing, as well as white-collar jobs.²⁴⁶ Following 1935’s construction “boom,” when roughly 16,500 Jewish workers were employed in the industry, the number of Jewish construction workers plummeted, to a low of roughly 5,000 in 1938, and then between 7,000-9,000 in the early years of World War II.²⁴⁷

The industry was also becoming increasingly Mizrahi. Among the shrinking numbers of Jewish construction workers, the share of Mizrahi Jews grew. By 1939, roughly twenty percent of Mizrahim worked in construction, compared to roughly fourteen percent of Ashkenazi Jews.²⁴⁸ By World War II’s final years, the Sephardic Jewish newspaper *Hed ha-Mizrah* reported, certain trades in Jerusalem’s construction industry, such as tile-laying, quarrying, stone cutting, and construction materials production (as well as occupations like municipal sanitation workers, caretakers and guards), were overwhelmingly populated by Mizrahim. The article’s author, S. Malakhi, claimed that the fact that so many Mizrahim remained in these trades, for which there

²⁴⁶ Bernard D. (Dov) Weinryb, *ha-Dor ha-Sheni be-Erets Yisra’el ve-Darko ha-Miktso ‘it* [*The Second Generation in Palestine and their Professional Path*] (London: Ararat, 1954); Ben Ziman, *Binyan ha-Aretz*, 89-90. Weinryb’s sociological study of occupational patterns among the children of Zionist settlers clearly demonstrates their generation’s shift away from idealized forms of manual labor, primarily into white collar trades, a critical standpoint which likely won him very few friends during his brief time in Palestine between 1934-1939. It is thus, perhaps unsurprising that the study was published by the Ararat Publishing House in London, a venue most closely associated with another critic of Zionism, the intellectual Simon Rawidowicz. On Rawidowicz, see: David N. Myers, *Between Jew & Arab the Lost Voice of Simon Rawidowicz* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010).

²⁴⁷ Ben Ziman, *Binyan ha-Aretz*, 90-1.

²⁴⁸ *Davar*, August 24, 1939, 38-41; Weinryb, *ha-Dor ha-Sheni*, 43-44.

was very little demand throughout the war's construction standstill, had effectively transformed them into unskilled laborers, with no, or very low, permanent income. "Something like a sect [*kat*, although perhaps the term "caste," is a more appropriate translation] limited to certain professions was created," Malakhi wrote, stating he was unable to determine whether someone intended this to happen. The process did explain, however, the worsening state of Jerusalem's Mizrahi population in his view.²⁴⁹

Coolies East of Tel Aviv

The question of the future of the Hebrew construction worker which arose during the April 15 meeting, overlay a cleavage between the members of the Executive Committee. Those members who expressed concern regarding the future of Hebrew labor in the construction industry, also expressed alarm at the exploitative conditions of Palestinian workers employed by Histadrut-owned firms. The representatives of the Histadrut's Solel Boneh contracting company, meanwhile, were on the defensive, claiming they felt as if they were seated "on the accused bench" (*'al safsal ha-ne'eshamim*) for exploiting Palestinians and forsaking the Hebrew worker. In their defense, they first denied they were hurting the "Arab worker" at all: If anything, Palestinians working for Solel Boneh were profiting. Secondly, the most important thing at stake, they argued, was not the future of Hebrew labor in a specific industry, but the existence of Solel Boneh as a tool of

²⁴⁹ *Hed ha-Mizrah*, October 27, 1944; *Davar*, April 16, 1945.

economic power. Hiring more Jewish labor would mean losing government tenders or operating at a loss. Either could bring Solel Boneh's downfall.²⁵⁰

Several of the Histadrut Secretariat members rejected the company's claims. In their view, the wage gap between Jewish and Palestinian workers was egregious. Ziamah Aharonovich (1899-1970) (who would later change his name to Zalman Aran and become a long serving Israeli Minister of Education and one of the architects of the state's education system in its first two decades), stated that regarding Solel Boneh's existence as the foremost objective at present and condoning the employment of cheap Palestinian labor to preserve it, threatened the Histadrut with "a moral and political failure." The reliance on underpaid Palestinian labor, he suggested, would place Jewish workers in Palestine in a colonial relationship with Palestinian Arabs: While "[f]or generations, the English worker has gained what he has based on exploiting the colonies," Jews in Palestine, "with our small shoulders [here, Aharonovich turned to Yiddish: '*mit undzere shmole pleytses*']," were in an entirely different position. The exploitation of Palestinian workers by Histadrut owned companies would expose Zionism, already "surrounded by enemies," to a "most grave courthouse" after World War II ended.²⁵¹

Aharonovich's invocation of the English worker's relationship to Britain's colonies recalled the Executive Committee's 1929 memorandum to the High

²⁵⁰ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C.

²⁵¹ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C. I thank Ayelet Brinn and Sam Shuman for their assistance with the translation from Yiddish.

Commissioner, discussed in chapter two, which similarly regarded a colonial division of labor in Palestine as a moral failure.²⁵² But, unlike the authors of the 1929 Memorandum, Aharonovich now also called attention to the coercive power which instituting and maintaining such a division of labor required and which he thought the Zionist enterprise still lacked. Aharonovich thus indicated the oft-overlooked role of such power in labor Zionist politics, which Zachary Lockman has called attention to.²⁵³ The Histadrut, Aharonovich implied, was no British Empire. If it adopted such exploitative practices now, retribution would surely come later.²⁵⁴

For Hillel Dan of Solel Boneh, these arguments were irrelevant. The goal of his work, he stated, was to increase the Jewish population in Palestine. For this, a strong Solel Boneh was crucial. “Should that matter be endangered,” Dan clarified, he would grant it precedence over any moral question:

if I have no other way [to guarantee a Jew’s right to exist in Palestine or elsewhere] – I am willing to exploit an Arab as well. This is not a question of us exploiting a colony to send someone money. We need to force our way in this land to sustain ourselves [emphasis in the original], to live.²⁵⁵

²⁵² See fn. 180 above.

²⁵³ Lockman, “Land, Labor, and the Logic of Zionism.”

²⁵⁴ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. Another defense of Solel Boneh’s use of “Arab labor” during the war, penned by David Hacoheh for the Solel Boneh magazine, *Ba-Mif’al (In the Factory)* in 1944, is included in the *In Years of Emergency* anthology. In the piece, Hacoheh, who was also present at the April 15, 1942 meeting analyzed here, complains that Solel Boneh’s rich record in conquering labor for Jewish workers has been forgotten, and that the company is being unduly singled out for criticism, if only because the public has no expectations from private contractors. Other pieces in the anthology, like that of Y. Mashal, published in the Sarafand Workers’ Council leaflet in 1940, provide a glimpse of the sort of criticism leveled at Solel Boneh by workers. Biletzki, *In Years of Emergency*, 54-55, 135-137.

Dan's argument was simple, its existential tenor likely forged in light of events in Europe, even if the reality of Nazi death camps had not yet come into full view: If an exploitative division of labor was necessary to assure Jewish life in Palestine, Dan argued, so be it. This, to him, was altogether different from the question of the English working class's gains from British colonialism. Whether others would agree was another matter. Dan did not fear anyone holding the Histadrut accountable, as Aharonovich did. If Solel Boneh's approach was successful, he argued, that is, "if we are a force (*be-mida she-nihey koakh*)..., we will have what to respond to such accounting." The sort of coercive power Aharonovich thought Zionists in Palestine lacked, Dan indicated, was close at hand.

Golda Meyerson (later, Meir) (1898-1978), also of the Histadrut's Secretariat, positioned herself as a mediator between the sides. She considered the question of Hebrew labor in construction crucial. On the other hand, she, like Hillel Dan, "was never concerned," from a moral standpoint, that the Histadrut was "causing injustice to the Arabs," even if this was hard to explain to socialists elsewhere. Yet, when Meyerson expressed what did concern her, she also shed light on what might have prevented such broader understanding – the institution of a racialized division of labor.²⁵⁶

Undertaking a government tender with Palestinian workers as Solel Boneh's leadership desired to do, Meyerson argued, was only justifiable if it ensured that future works would employ Hebrew labor. Moreover, there were particular projects which

²⁵⁶ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C.

Meyerson thought it was important to carry out solely with Hebrew labor. This was the case when tenders brought the Histadrut into contact with the relatively small US Military presence in Palestine, as in the building of the Tel Litvinsky base east of Tel Aviv. Works like Tel Litvinsky had “a large political role”, in Meyerson’s view. They should be accepted and performed with Hebrew labor out of “long term political calculations,” similar to those which motivated the “sending of Hebrew workers to Iran.”²⁵⁷

In the Tel Litvisnky case, these “political calculations,” had a specifically American twist. They should “prove [to the Americans] that the Hebrew worker can carry out such work[s], not just the Hebrew contractor” [emphasis in the original, NBZ]. The Tel Litvinsky works provided an opportunity to impress upon US forces – and, presumably, political actors – the vitality of Zionism’s undertaking. Meyerson’s concerns about US perceptions were rooted in her assumptions about how US officials thought of Jews. “Immense buildings have been built by Jewish contractors in New York, but a Jewish worker has not been seen there,” Meyerson noted. It was crucial therefore to “prove to the Americans... that the Hebrew worker there is doing the whole job, from start to finish, [and] not ‘coolies’.”²⁵⁸

Meyerson’s insistence on guaranteeing that American forces witness Jewish workers and not just Jewish capital in action, was rooted in labor Zionism’s commitment to refashioning not only the Jewish body but to performing that refashioning on the

²⁵⁷ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C.

²⁵⁸ Protocol of Meeting of the Histadrut Executive Committee Secretariat with the Work Center and the Contracting Institutions, April 15, 1942, LMA, IV-208-2363C.

international stage. Her use of the term “coolie” in reference to how American onlookers might perceive Palestinian Arab workers, however, is, at first blush, striking. As Madhavi Kale, Moon-Ho Jung, Lisa Lowe and others have shown, the meaning of the term “coolie” varied widely between and within the British Imperial and American contexts, shifting between “free” and “unfree” labor, from the nineteenth century onwards.²⁵⁹ When the Milwaukee-raised Meyerson’s used the term to refer to Palestinian workers building a US military hospital in British-ruled Palestine, she could equally have been thinking of the British or American contexts for “coolie labor.” What did remain consistent about *coolie*, despite its “plasticity,” was its application to distinctly racialized and exploited laborers, and its association with the excesses of colonialism.²⁶⁰ This was no less true in Palestine: when politicians or authors in the contemporary Hebrew press in Palestine used the term “coolie,” they typically did so either to invoke its exploitative valances, its racial ones, or both. The implication of Meyerson’s use of the term then, was that to outside onlookers versed in the global color line, Palestinian workers working under Jewish managers could appear to be precisely such *coolie* labor.²⁶¹

Meyerson’s invocation of the workers sent to Iran, situates the discussions of the April 15, 1942 Executive Committee meeting in direct relation to the Solel Boneh works in Abadan, where Yehouda Shenhav locates the zero point of the encounter between Zionism and the Arab Jews.²⁶² While the works at Abadan would not begin until later that

²⁵⁹ Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor Migration in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.

²⁶⁰ Lowe, *The Intimacies*, 27.

²⁶¹ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

²⁶² See Introduction above. Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, esp. Chapters 1 & 2.

year, by April the contracting company had already set up an office in Baghdad.²⁶³ The encounter of the Zionist emissaries to Abadan with a system of *coolie* labor and its disparities, which positioned them “as white Europeans,” constituted a key component of what Shenhav describes as the “phenomenology of colonialism,” defining their attitude towards Mizrahi Jews.²⁶⁴

If the colonial context of Abadan was culturally formative of the encounter between Zionism and Arab Jews, then the near-simultaneity, even precedence, of discussions about colonial divisions of labor and “coolies” in Palestine itself, coupled with the increase of Mizrahi Jews’ and Palestinians’ share in menial labor executed by the Histadrut and its organs, lent these hierarchies both a cultural basis and a structural foundation in the labor market. Taking the link which Meyerson draws between Abadan and Tel Litvinsky seriously, albeit for connections which Meyerson herself would have likely refused, takes us a step further towards understanding the colonial foundations of social hierarchies in 1950s and 1960s Israel. By drawing Shenhav’s study of the encounter at Abadan more closely into Palestine’s sphere, it allows us to do so through the sort of “integrated approach” to Mizrahi and Palestinian Arab history which Shenhav, building on Shohat and Shafir, espouses.

Following Meyerson’s comments, to which their appeared to be little objection, the remainder of the Executive Committee’s meeting for the most part eschewed the explicitly colonial framework for discussing Solel Boneh’s use of Palestinian Arab labor. Instead, it turned to the by then familiar question of squaring the use of Hebrew labor

²⁶³ Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 46

²⁶⁴ Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 25-26.

with the supposedly “iron laws of economics.” That is, to the matter of employing Jewish workers at the expense of profitability. Berl Repetur and David Remez dominated the discussion, warning repeatedly of the dwindling ranks of Jewish construction workers, partially a result of the negligence of their affairs by the Histadrut in recent years.

While the April 15, 1942 meeting concluded on a relatively positive note, the crisis in the construction industry it sought to address subsided only partially in the subsequent years of the War and after. The concerns Repetur, Remez, and others expressed during the April 1942 meeting, about the potential disappearance of the Jewish construction worker, extending beyond the conditions of the wartime economy, proved prescient. Between 1945-1948, the shortage in construction workers in Palestine was a major concern, prompting the establishment of training programs by the Histadrut and reaching even the British parliament.²⁶⁵ Compounded by a shortage in building materials and years of stagnant civilian construction, Palestine underwent a cross-sector housing crisis.²⁶⁶ The shortage, in both housing and workers, particularly skilled ones, continued beyond the 1948 war and the Nakba. As the following chapters show, the massive construction projects required by the Israeli state in its initial years were carried out to a significant extent by an underpaid, undervalued and largely “unskilled” construction workforce. These “lower” echelons of the construction workforce would quickly become the domain of Mizrahi Jews, Palestinian citizens, and after 1967, Palestinian non-citizen subjects from the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

²⁶⁵ *Hamashkif*, 21 March 1946; *Ha'aretz*, 24 February 1947. The Executive Committee, General Federation of Jewish Labour in Eretz Israel, *The Building Worker in Palestine: Submitted to the International Building Trades Congress* (Tel-Aviv: Histadrut, 1946), 26-8.

²⁶⁶ See the concluding section of Chapter 1 above.

Peppered throughout the Executive Committee's 1942 discussion about the construction industry and the future of the Hebrew construction worker are references to how the direction which the industry and the worker take would impact a future Jewish state. But these references are for the most part oblique. Talk of a state in 1942, in the throes of a global war, was necessarily abstract. The following sections examine how a different group of individuals, Zionist politicians and experts on economics and labor envisioned the future Jewish state's labor market, immediately following UNSCOP's recommendations for Palestine's partition in September 1947. By then, the contours of the state, its boundaries, and its demography, appeared to be much more concrete. The experts were tasked specifically with proposing plans for how the new state should address its "Arab labor question." This, in the committee's view, was to be a pressing problem in a state whose population, according to the UNSCOP plan, would be roughly forty-five percent Arab, and whose boundaries would be open to the residents of the neighboring Palestinian Arab state and to the Middle East as a whole.

Equivocating Equality

In May 1947, three months after Britain announced its plans to withdraw from Palestine and transfer responsibility for the land's future to the United Nations, the UN formed the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) to address this responsibility. The Committee, composed of representatives of eleven member states – Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia - was to serve in an investigative and

recommendation-making role. Committee members conducted a several weeks' long visit to Palestine, toured Jewish refugee camps in Europe, met with representatives of the Yishuv's various political strands in Palestine and with representatives of several Arab nations in Beirut. They did not, however, meet with Palestinian representatives. The Arab Higher Committee boycotted UNSCOP on the grounds that Britain's transfer of authority to the UN was illegal. UNSCOP issued its recommendations for partitioning Palestine into Arab and Jewish states with a separation zone under international administration running from Jerusalem to Jaffa, on September 3, 1947 (Fig. 3.1).²⁶⁷

Even prior to UNSCOP's establishment, the Yishuv leadership began preparations for an eventual transition of power from the British to a sovereign Jewish state. Then, in October 1947, the Yishuv institutions launched the Emergency Committee, to begin planning the structures of the future state's government, and the divisions of responsibility and authority within it.²⁶⁸ The Committee's head was David Ben Gurion, and it included eight subcommittees, each responsible for a number of related topics, according to members' expertise.

²⁶⁷ The partition plan was based on the proposal of a majority of the member nations. Three nations – India, Iran, and Yugoslavia – proposed a federative solution, rather than partition. For an analysis of the UNSCOP report and its relationship to interwar discourses about partitions, population “transfer,” and “minorities” in the Middle East, see: Laura Robson, *States of Separation: Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 132-134. UNSCOP's full report and additional related documents can be found online at: Economic Cooperation Foundation, “UNSCOP Report (1947),” <https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/454> [last accessed: July 12, 2020].

²⁶⁸ Jonathan David Fine's, *A State is Born: The Establishment of the Israeli System of Government, 1947-1951*, translated posthumously from the Hebrew in 2018, dedicates its first part to the work of the Emergency Committee, and is, as far as I am aware, the only study to do so extensively. Accordingly, I draw much of the descriptive narrative about the Emergency Committee and its work from Fine's volume. Although Fine used the Committee's planning for the future Labor Ministry as one of his two case studies alongside the Ministry of the Interior, his study is for the most part an institutional history and he does not mention any discussions or documents regarding the projected 45% of the population who were to be Palestinian according to the partition plan. Jonathan David Fine, *A State is Born: The Establishment of the Israeli System of Government, 1947-1951* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018).

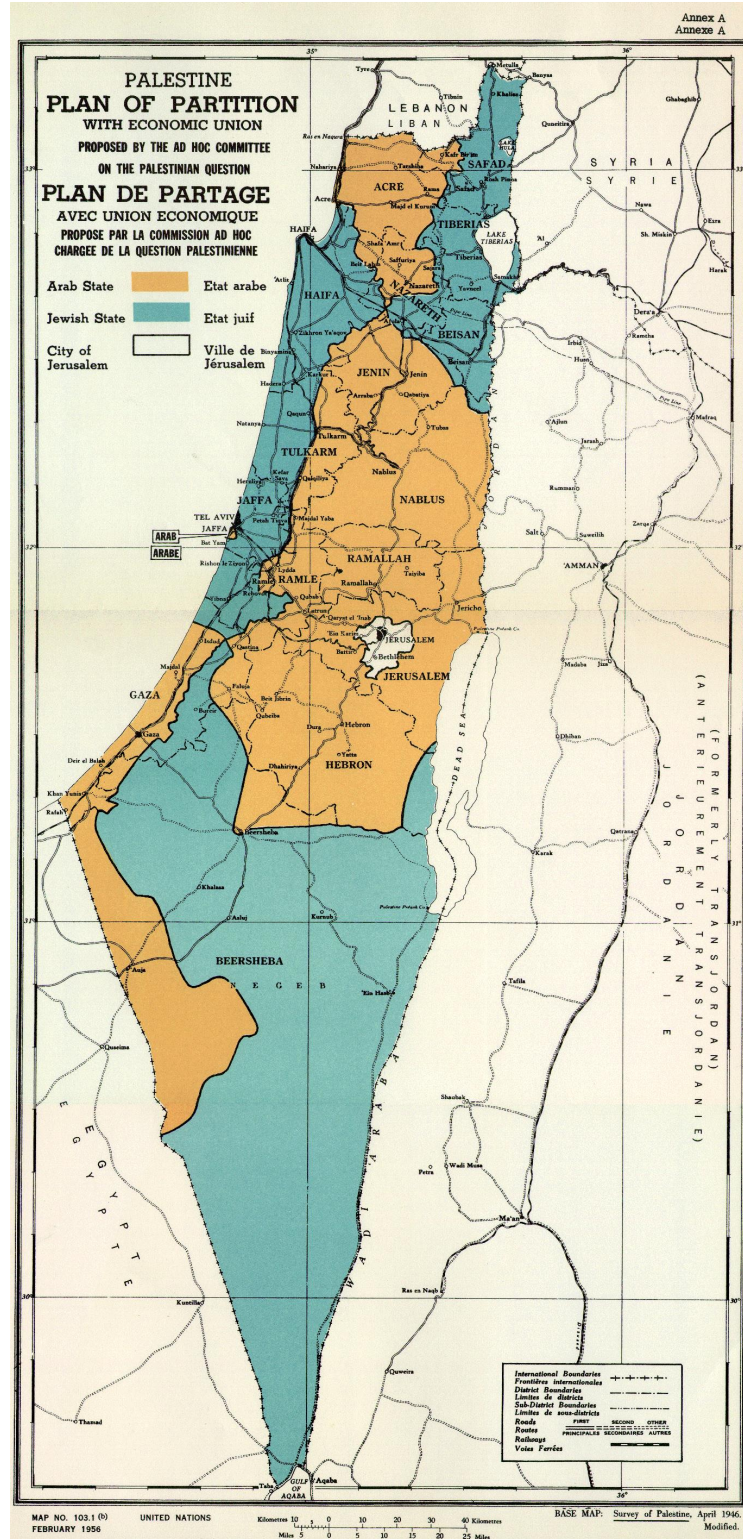


Fig. 3.1. Palestine Plan of Partition, United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, 1947.

Subcommittee C, headed by Yitzhak Gruenbaum (1879-1970), a former head of the Jewish Agency's Departments of Immigration and Labor, who had been a member of Polish parliament before immigrating to Palestine in 1933, was responsible, among other matters, for planning the state's Labor Ministry. Jonathan Fine rightly points out that of all the administrative issues the Yishuv would have to tackle as it transitioned into a state government, labor was one in which the Zionist institutions had robust structures and experience to build on. While these pre-existing institutions, primarily the Jewish Agency's Department of Labor, would likely serve as a basis for the new ministry, they would also have to undergo significant changes in scope, responsibilities, and structure.²⁶⁹

Alongside questions of staffing, physical structures to occupy the future ministry's offices, and other matters which all subcommittees were required to address, Subcommittee C's planning for the Labor Ministry also included several unique challenges. These were rooted in part in the need to incorporate duties previously handled by the Mandate Government's Department of Labor (established in 1942), such as workplace safety regulation and inspection alongside the responsibilities and functions of the Jewish Agency's Department of Labor.²⁷⁰ However, in the eyes of some subcommittee members and the experts enlisted to assist them, the "central question" which the move from the Jewish Agency's Department of Labor to planning a

²⁶⁹ Fine, *A State is Born*, 73, 85-7.

²⁷⁰ Fine, *A State is Born*, 84-90.

government labor ministry presented the subcommittee with, and one which Fine does not address, was “the Arab labor question.”²⁷¹

As mentioned above, according to the UNSCOP’s recommended partition plan, which at the time of the Emergency Committee’s establishment was still the primary blueprint for the future states, this population would be comprised of roughly fifty-five percent Jews and forty-five percent Palestinian Arabs. According to this plan, the so-called “Arab labor problem” a major external threat from the perspective of Zionist colonization and settlement since the late-Ottoman period, would to a significant degree, become an internal question for the new state to tackle.²⁷²

As much of the critical literature on the conquest of labor has shown, some of the strategies adopted or considered by the Yishuv until 1947 to address this “problem” – the racially differentiated wages and concepts of each group’s standards of living, often summarized by Zionist spectators as the problem of “cheap Arab labor” – paid lip-service to, or even genuinely sought to address the profound inequalities between Jewish and Arab workers. However, such egalitarian considerations were time and again forsaken or deferred in favor of the immediate interests of Jewish workers and the “Hebrew economy.” Indeed, Mandate Palestine’s “dual economy” – even if it was largely an abstraction which the land’s actual economic conditions, interactions and transactions repeatedly refuted – nonetheless provided the Yishuv with a license to not only disregard,

²⁷¹ ISA-no-no-0007e6x: Dr. A. Boneh, “The Problem of Arab Labour Within the New Jewish State,” September 30, 1947; Dr. L. Grünbaum, “*He’arot le-Hasdarat Shuq ha-‘Avoda ba-Medina ha-Yehudit*” [Notes for the Organization of the Labor Market in the Jewish State], January 19, 1948[?]; Lavi Schneider, “*Hasdarat ‘Inyanei ‘Avoda ba-Medina ha-‘Ivrit*” [Organizing Labor Matters in the Hebrew State], n.d.

²⁷² United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, *Report to the General Assembly*, Vol. 1, September 3, 1947.

but constantly position its “own” economy against an Arab one. In the new state, however, such a separation would present a wholly different challenge.

Subcommittee C’s planning efforts were thus faced with a set of foundational questions regarding the racially divided labor market: Could the new state preserve the Yishuv’s Mandate-era approach built on economic segregation, unequal wages and rights, precedence for Hebrew labor, and preference for Jewish economic interests? What would such a preservation entail? If continued segregation was not a viable option, what were the alternatives? What kind of economic responsibilities would the new state have towards its nearly 500,000 projected Palestinian citizens?

Before examining the work of Subcommittee C, a discussion of the Yishuv’s plans for managing a population of nearly 500,000 Palestinian citizens on the eve and during the initial stages of the 1948 War, begs addressing one of the oldest and thorniest historiographical debates regarding the events of the war: to what extent did the Yishuv’s leadership plan the mass expulsion of Palestinians during the 1948 War? It may be tempting to read the evidence presented, in this section and the following one, of plans proposed within the Yishuv leadership for a future which did not envision a Palestinian Nakba, as indicative of the unplanned nature of Palestinian expulsion. I do not think however that such a reading would be supported by the evidence itself. There is little reason to assume that if there had been plans for expulsion, the members of Subcommittee C and the experts they enlisted would have been privy to them.

The subcommittee’s early 1948 discussions reveal the extent to which its members viewed the inequality of the Mandate period’s labor market as deeply ingrained

in a set of economic, cultural, and social differences between Palestine's native Arab population and the Jewish settler population. In a January 11, 1948 summary document, the subcommittee's head, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, flagged the institution of a minimum wage as one step which would need to be taken immediately once the state begins governing. A minimum wage, Gruenbaum argued, was necessary to "establish equality in the labor market and terminate the competition of cheap labor."²⁷³ During Subcommittee C's meeting two weeks later, however members of the subcommittee expressed reservations as to the advisability of Gruenbaum's statement regarding "establishing equality," in light of the existing wage gaps between Palestinian Arab and Jewish labor.²⁷⁴

Moshe Shapira (1902-1970) of the religious Zionist Ha-Po'el ha-Mizrahi party, suggested that given the deep "difference" between the "level" of Jews and Arabs, Gruenbaum remove the references to "equality," and leave only the language about "instituting a minimum wage." Shapira resorted to a qualifying discourse by now familiar in Zionist circles, stating that, "with all our desire to bring forth equality, there is no doubt that some time will pass before this will be fulfilled.... At present, we should not commit to achieving equality, something the state will not be able to do."²⁷⁵ Avraham Katznelson of MAPAI expressed a similar sentiment, even as he stated that he understood

²⁷³ "Maskanot" [Conclusions], January 11, 1948, ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁷⁴ Subcommittee C Meeting Protocol for the day of 25.1.48, January 25, 1948, ISA-no-no-000s6m1.

²⁷⁵ Subcommittee C Meeting Protocol for the day of 25.1.48, January 25, 1948, ISA-no-no-000s6m1. This argument regarding the supposedly objective "difficulty" of achieving the desired equality between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and the amount of time doing so required, was not a new one. It also recurred, in a more elaborate fashion, in some of the expert reports examined in the following section. For prior instances of the argument see: Rokach, "Ptiha: Toldot Kibush Miktzo 'a ha-Even ve-ha-Sid" [Introduction: Chronicles of the Conquest of Stone and Lime], n.d., LMA, IV-320-11.

that establishing a minimum wage seeks to replace the principle of Hebrew labor, a principle “which has no place in the state.” In that case, he argued, he agrees that the summary “should not particularly emphasize the matter” (*ein lehavlit et ha-davar be-meyuḥad*), presumably referring to the concerns voiced by Shapira.²⁷⁶

Gruenbaum’s response to the two appears, at first, to be unequivocal: “It is obvious that in the [Jewish] State,” he replied, “neither the conquest of labor nor the principle of Hebrew labor will be discussed.” He was quick to qualify this statement, however, by noting that there will be two problems, that of cheap labor, and the need to guarantee that all unskilled work does not pass into Arab hands. The only distinctions the state would be able to make regarding the right to certain jobs, Gruenbaum states, would be between citizens and between foreign nationals who enter the country illegally. The minimum wage, accordingly, will be the only device at the state’s disposal to address the problem of cheap labor.²⁷⁷ And yet, shortly after Gruenbaum made such assured statements about the necessity to forsake the principle of Hebrew labor and its conquest, and the impossibility of a policy discriminating between citizens within the future state, three expert memoranda submitted to the committee suggested various ways to sustain the first two and institute the latter.

²⁷⁶ Subcommittee C Meeting Protocol for the day of 25.1.48, January 25, 1948, ISA-no-no-000s6m1.

²⁷⁷ Subcommittee C Meeting Protocol for the day of 25.1.48, January 25, 1948, ISA-no-no-000s6m1. Following Gruenbaum’s clarification, one Y. Rabinowitz, attending the meeting as an “expert on labor affairs,” suggested that instead of removing the reference to equality altogether, a more measured statement that the minimum wage “will lead to equality,” could be introduced. The minimum wage, he sought to remind those present, would also be important in preventing the continued exploitation of Palestinian Arab workers by Arab employers.

Planning a Division of Labor

The authors of the three memoranda found in Subcommittee C's archival records, were Alfred Bonne (1899-1960), A.L. Grünbaum (Ga'aton) (1898-1984), both leading economists, and Lavi-Yitzhak Schneider (Shani-Or) (b. 1871), a high-ranking administrator in the Mandate government's Department of Labor.²⁷⁸ Despite writing the memoranda at different moments – one before the civil war stage of the 1947-1949 war and the Nakba began, and the other two in the shadow of the fighting – all three authors' plans were rooted in the demographic estimates of the UNSCOP plan. That is, they were plans for a Jewish state in which nearly half the population would be Palestinian Arabs.

When Alfred Bonne authored his 4-page memorandum, "The Problem of Arab Labour within the New Jewish State," on September 30, 1947 – less than a month after UNSCOP published its partition proposal – the Yishuv had yet to establish its Emergency Committee.²⁷⁹ The document opens with Bonne's calculations, based on UNSCOP's Report, of the size of the future state's Arab population. He estimates a total non-Jewish

²⁷⁸ Bonne and Grünbaum would both assume important roles in economic research and policy making in the early decades of the state. Bonne headed the Department of Economics at the Hebrew University and was instrumental in founding the university's School of Social Sciences in 1953. Grünbaum, would author a series of important plans and research projects at the invitation of the Prime Minister's office, the Israeli Bureau of Statistics and the Bank of Israel. See: J. R., "Professor A. Bonne"; Kleiman, "A.L. Ga'aton u-Mishnato"; Michael Michaely, "ha-Hug le-Kalkala ba-Universita ha-Ivrit: Yamei be-Reshit - me-Tatspit Ishit [The Department of Economics of the Hebrew University Early Days — from a Personal Observation]," *ha-Riv'on le-Kalkala* 54, no. 3/4 (December 2007): 417–38. The head of Subcommittee C, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, commissioned a fourth report from Eliezer Be'eri (Bauer), an Arabist and a leading member of the Department of Arabic Activities of the binational Marxist Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir movement, however I have been unable to locate the report in the subcommittee's records.

²⁷⁹ Although it was likely the earliest report written, it appears to have been the last of the three to reach the subcommittee, as Bonne submitted it only on March 3, 1948. If the document's letterhead is any indication, Bonne likely wrote the report as part of his work at the Jewish Agency's Jewish Research Institute. Alfred Bonne, "The Problem of Arab Labour within the New Jewish State," ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

population, “the bulk of which are Arabs,” of between 470,000-480,000.²⁸⁰ Among the “grave [political and economic] problems,” which such a large Arab “minority” in the new Jewish state would create, Bonne regards that of labor as the foremost economic difficulty. How, he asks, would “such an enormous number of Arab... workers and producers,” impact the “Jewish economy”?²⁸¹

This problem, Bonne explains, was not entirely new. In fact, it was similar to that which the large Palestinian Arab population in areas of Jewish settlement constituted for the Jewish economy up until that point. In the past, Bonne continues, the Yishuv attempted to handle this problem by establishing “a dual economy,” intended to protect the “high economic and social level” of the Jewish sector against cheaper Arab labor and commodities. Ideally, partition would have enabled the continuation of such economic segregation. However, UNSCOP’s plan, “burden[ed]” the Jewish state with a significant Palestinian Arab population, risking “extremely oppressing effects on the Jewish capacity of competition.”²⁸² Therefore, Bonne’s memorandum proposes three possible approaches to “tackle” the problem:

- (a) The Arab worker within the Jewish State has free access to the Jewish labour market, enjoying the same rights as his Jewish colleagues;
- (b) The admittance of Arab workers to the Jewish labour market is governed by a quota, which may be revised from time to time, its size to be determined by the needs and interests of the Jewish economy;

²⁸⁰ Bonne begins with a figure of 416,000 Arab citizens, which “together with the Bedouins... would come to between 470,000 and 480,000 souls as against 500,000 Jews.” Bonne’s figures somewhat misrepresent UNSCOP’s estimates. The report estimates that the population of the proposed Jewish state would consist of 498,000 Jews, 407,000 “Arabs and others,” and states that “[i]n addition there will be in the Jewish State about 90,000 Bedouins, cultivators and stock owners who seek grazing further afield in dry seasons.” United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, *Report to the General Assembly*, Vol. 1, 54; Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁸¹ Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁸² Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

- (c) The system of “dual” economy will be continued within the new Jewish State. In this event, the [a]uthorities of the Jewish State will carry on the policy, pursued by the Mandatory, of ignoring the discrimination practiced against the Arab worker within large sections of the Jewish economy.²⁸³

In Bonne’s view, the first approach – free (and equal) access to the labor market, for all citizens of the new state – seriously threatened the “remarkable achievements” of the Jewish economy thus far. Simply abolishing the “policy of exclusive Jewish work” which enabled this achievement, would result in an “immediate... flooding of the Jewish labour market with cheap Arab workers.”²⁸⁴ Employers could not be expected to prefer more expensive Jewish workers. Jewish workers, including new immigrants, would face reduced job opportunities, wages would drop, and the new state would draw significant Arab labor migration from neighboring countries. Bonne’s conclusions in this respect are unequivocal: even if a policy that restricts Palestinian citizens’ access to the labor market causes “grave apprehensions,” granting them free and equal access, “appears impossible.” An approach to organizing the labor market which Bonne himself might refer to as a “progressive” one, as will be seen below, appears to him out of the question. The question, then, becomes what restrictions should be implemented and how.²⁸⁵

The second approach Bonne evaluates involves setting an adjustable quota for admitting Palestinian citizens as employees into the Jewish sector. This quota would be periodically evaluated and altered in accordance with the sector’s needs. “Central control offices” would issue labor cards for Arab workers eligible for employment, as well as

²⁸³ Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁸⁴ Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁸⁵ Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

administer their use. Only workers who had such labor cards would be eligible for employment. Bonne's description of this option is the driest and most technical of all three. This is likely indicative of his preference for it, although he does not state so explicitly. He describes the quota system's main drawback as the "not inconsiderable" administrative effort it would require. And even so, he remarks, there is sufficient experience in instituting such systems elsewhere to allow for their adoption and adaptation.

Finally, Bonne turns to describing the third option: continuing the present system of a "dual economy." That is, "a voluntary separation of the Jewish and Arab economic sector, and the maintenance of bars to 'foreign' labour." Bonne raises two "grave objections" to this option. The first is a moral argument, of sorts. Bonne assumes that the state which will exhibit a "strong progressive trend," is unlikely, to adopt such a policy. The most difficult aspect for such a state, he believes, would be to "maintain an attitude of indifference in... clashes [over] working places," as the British did.²⁸⁶ The second argument against this option is considerably more involved and seems to be the real source of Bonne's concern: the potentially "grave repercussions" on the international stage if labor organizations in the new state refuse to admit Palestinians into their ranks.²⁸⁷

A "policy of discrimination" of this sort, Bonne writes, is not without precedent. The example he cites, that of South Africa, effectively extended Hayyim Arlosoroff's

²⁸⁶ Bonne, "The Problem," ISA-no-no-0007e6x. What precisely Bonne means by flagging this aspect of a segregated economy as particularly problematic is somewhat vague.

²⁸⁷ Bonne, "The Problem," ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

comparison from two decades prior.²⁸⁸ Bonne claims that under the conditions faced by the new Jewish state, such a policy would be harder to pursue, if only for pragmatic reasons. In the South African case, Bonne states, “there are nearly no countries with a negro government that could retaliate [against the policy of racial discrimination of black South Africans].”²⁸⁹ The new Jewish state, however, would face a radically different situation. In particular, “the economic fate of numerous Jewish communities whose economic security is not infrequently menaced even now, will be at stake.” Although he does not state so explicitly, it is clear from this juxtaposition that what he has in mind is a sort of racial axis of fidelity and retaliation. The parallel to the relative absence of countries with “negro government[s],” being in this instance the abundance of countries with “Arab governments” in the proposed Jewish state’s immediate surroundings.²⁹⁰

In contrast to Bonne’s more focused memorandum, Aryeh Ludwig Grünbaum’s plan, submitted to Subcommittee C on January 19, 1948 was intended to provide a blueprint for the entire labor market, specifically during what Grünbaum refers to as the state’s “development period”. Nonetheless, the “Arab labor question” is a primary focus of Grünbaum’s as well. His analysis of this question, meanwhile, appears at first to place him directly at odds with Bonne.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Lockman, “Land, Labor, and the Logic of Zionism” 22-27.

²⁸⁹ Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁹⁰ Bonne, “The Problem,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁹¹ Grünbaum, “*He ‘arot*,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x. According to Grünbaum, during the development period the state’s primary objectives would be absorbing and providing housing to holocaust survivors currently in refugee camps in Europe, expanding the state’s economy to support the additional population, and solidifying the state’s boundaries. Middle Eastern and North African Jews are noticeably absent from his calculations.

Grünbaum argues that the state's initial development period, which he estimates will last between 10-15 years, will generate a considerable number of new jobs, primarily in construction, public works, and government administration. Since existing production needs will persist, the new jobs generated by the development economy, will mean that this period will be characterized not by unemployment but "by [a need] to find working hands to undertake all the necessary jobs."²⁹² As a result, there will likely be very little competition over jobs between Jews and Arabs. The main concern regarding wages will not be their reduction due to "social swamping" by the cheap labor of the state's Arab citizens, but exaggerated wages for all.²⁹³ Moreover, unless the "development period" will be substantially extended, the state would likely need to rely also on migrant labor and imports. The primary challenge of administering the labor market would thus be the prevention of irregular entry of "Arabs... from neighboring countries," primarily the neighboring Palestinian state, and of general "chaos" in the labor market due to extensive Jewish immigration.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Grünbaum, "He 'arot." ISA-no-no-0007e6x. Grünbaum acknowledges that this thesis and the plan he suggests in accordance with it, assume that necessary flows of capital, immigrants, materials, and technology would enter the new state during the development period. While there are numerous uncertainties and problems with that assumption, he states, those lay beyond the scope of the memorandum itself.

²⁹³ Grünbaum, "He 'arot." ISA-no-no-0007e6x. Grünbaum added the term "social swamping" in handwritten English to the otherwise typed-Hebrew memorandum. The provenance of the term is not entirely clear, although to the extent that it has been historically used in English, it seems to have appeared primarily in the South African context in reference to Afrikaner fears of cheap Indian labor. University of Natal Department of Economics, *Natal Regional Survey*, Vol. 11, 2 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961); Patrick J. Furlong, "Improper Intimacy: Afrikaans Churches, the National Party and the Anti-Miscegenation Laws," *South African Historical Journal* 31, no. 1 (November 1994), 65, 71; Garth Stevens, "'Racialised' Discourses: Understanding Perceptions of Threat in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *South African Journal of Psychology* 28, no. 4 (December 1, 1998), 209. The American author Harrison Rhodes also used the term in his description of changes to the demography of Chicago in the early twentieth century. Harrison Garfield Rhodes, *American Towns and People* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1920), 90.

²⁹⁴ Grünbaum, "He 'arot." ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

Although Grünbaum's analysis of the challenges is at odds with Bonne's, his proposed solutions echo the administrative and bureaucratic approach of Bonne's preferred suggestion. The key difference between Bonne's proposal and Grünbaum's, is that the latter insists that state involvement in the labor market should be, at least on the face of things, universally applied to all citizens. Grünbaum suggests creating a "rationalized" labor market, in which all individuals seeking employment will be assigned to specific trades by governmental employment bureaus. The bureaus would classify all workers according to their capabilities and direct them to employment according to the economy's needs. Each worker will receive a labor card, detailing skills, level, and designated employment. Employers, meanwhile, would be prohibited from hiring individuals without an employment card.²⁹⁵ Such a system, Grünbaum argues, would ensure efficient use of the labor force during the crucial stages of the development period. It would also curtail the threat of the entry of "unwanted foreign Arabs" into the labor market, without breaching the UN partition decision's guarantee of free travel between the new Arab and Jewish states.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Grünbaum, "He 'arot." ISA-no-no-0007e6x. Aware of the totalitarian connotations of such an approach, Grünbaum looks to British postwar employment policies, according to which the unemployed were required to accept any form of "suitable employment" offered to them. Somewhat masking the extent to which his proposal goes beyond the British policy, Grünbaum argues that if "England, a land with a distinct liberal tradition," has adopted such an approach, there was "no reason to be ashamed of taking parallel measures." Grünbaum appears to base this reference on an *International Labour Review* article regarding "postwar manpower problems" in Europe, although, as noted above, the precise details of his proposal seem to take the various "manpower budget" policies of European countries considerably further in terms of the coercion they entail. "Post-War Manpower Problems in Europe," *International Labour Review* 55, no. 6 (1947): 485–511.

²⁹⁶ Grünbaum, "He 'arot." ISA-no-no-0007e6x. Citizens of the new Arab state would be able to travel freely between their state and the Jewish state, but employment will normally remain restricted to labor card-holding citizens. At the same time, the labor card system could also be extended to foreigners when necessary, allowing for the introduction of temporary migrant labor.

Grünbaum explicitly rejects instituting separate employment bureaus for Arab citizens of the state, a practice which he argues “gives the impression of their discrimination” (*me‘oreret et ha-roshem shel haflayatam le-ra‘a*), and manifests a “politics” he describes as “unwanted and even impossible, for a number of political and moral reasons.”²⁹⁷ What potential competition there still might be between the new state’s Arab and Jewish population, despite the abundance of employment offered during the development period, will in Grünbaum’s view be mitigated further by two factors: 1) the inability of the state’s Arab citizens to engage in all but unskilled labor during this initial period; and 2) the continued material support of non-governmental Zionist institutions for Jews in “conquest labor (‘*avoda kibushit*) in the village, quarries, ports, etc.”²⁹⁸ Thus, Grünbaum adopts the notion of Palestinian “backwardness,” and suitability primarily to unskilled labor which characterized and justified the racial division of labor during the Mandate period.²⁹⁹ He also endorses, like Bonne, the continuation of the conquest of labor, through the subsidization of Jewish workers – increasing their real income using non-governmental funds while nominally maintaining equal pay for equal work. It appears clear that Grünbaum’s main concern was not discrimination per se, but rather its “impression.”

Although he states in the memorandum’s summary that, “on principle, it is prohibited to discriminate against the Arab citizens of the Jewish state,” Grünbaum’s plan is rife with discriminatory practices. These are couched in terms of cultural differences

²⁹⁷ Grünbaum, “*He‘arot*.” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁹⁸ Grünbaum, “*He‘arot*.” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

²⁹⁹ Grünbaum, “*He‘arot*.” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

and differential needs. In this respect, his plan proposes no more than a slightly “softened” version of the racial division of labor that evolved during the Mandate period. It institutes a preference for an effectively segregated employment market, in which the employment bureaus will be instructed to “usually direct Arab workers to Arab workplaces and Jewish workers to Jewish workplaces.”³⁰⁰ And it endorses a continued racial wage gap, using non-governmental subsidies for Jewish workers, even in government funded public and development works.³⁰¹

The final proposals regarding the organization of the labor market to be discussed here, are those submitted to Subcommittee C by Lavi Schneider (Shani-Or). A generation the senior of the two economists, Bonne and Grünbaum, Schneider was an administrator in the Mandate government’s Department of Labor. Unlike Bonne and Grünbaum, Schneider was a permanent expert member of the subcommittee. He provided detailed proposals for the structure of the future state’s Labor Ministry, a lengthy plan for the

³⁰⁰ The memorandum further states that, “only Arabs who have been employed in Jewish workplaces for a long period of time and who are citizens of the Jewish state, will be allowed to stay in their places of work.”

³⁰¹ Grünbaum’s discriminatory assumptions extend into the memorandum’s appendices on housing construction and development works. In the housing appendix, Grünbaum assumes no need for housing construction in the rural Arab sector, arguing that self-construction during the agricultural “dead season” is the norm there. In doing so, he directly contradicts the Mandate government estimates he otherwise relies upon, as these suggested that it was precisely in the Arab villages where the need for housing was most acute. The development works appendix, meanwhile, relies on an assumption of the Arab citizens’ “low standard of living” to allot less schools, industry, and retail per one thousand Arab citizens than per an equal number of Jewish ones. Grünbaum does qualify the assumptions tied to the standard of living among Palestinian Arab citizens of the Jewish state somewhat, stating that the gap between them and between the Jewish citizens of the state may shrink after several years. Nonetheless, the memorandum suggests mechanisms for granting de facto preferential material conditions and treatment to the state’s Jewish citizens.

organization and administration of labor in the state, and a short memorandum dedicated specifically to the “Administration of the Arab Labor Market.”³⁰²

In both the lengthier plan and the short memorandum, Schneider divides the “Arab labor question” into three issues, which recall those discussed by Bonne and Grünbaum: 1) the level of wages; 2) regulating employment; and, 3) preventing entry of foreign workers from neighboring countries. Regulating the “Arab Labor problem”, Schneider writes, will require “a range of legal, economic and administrative measures.” Such measures should “protect the national [i.e., Jewish] character of the economy, while maintaining the rights of the Arab citizens and proper relations with the Arab population.”³⁰³

Like Bonne and Grünbaum, Schneider bases much of his analysis and recommendations on assumptions about the Palestinian citizens’ lower standard of living and the adjustment period which raising it to a “Jewish level” would require. To do so, Schneider turns to a theory of wages and consumption which had appeared occasionally in earlier discussions of the “cheap labor problem”: the idea that raising Arab wages and standards of living to those of Palestine’s Jewish population, could only be done gradually and over an extended period of time.³⁰⁴

³⁰² ISA-no-no-0007e6x: Schneider, “*Hasdarat ‘Inyanei ‘Avoda*”; Lavi Schneider, “*Hasdarat Shuq ha-‘Avoda ha-‘Aravi*” [Organizing the Arab Labor Market], n.d; “*Reshimat ha-Mehabrim she-Hegishu Tazkirim le-Va‘adat ha-Matzav*” [List of the Authors who Submitted Memoranda to the Emergency Committee], ISA-no-no-000zqgc. The brief report about the Arab labor market is ostensibly an excerpt from the lengthier proposal. However, there are some differences between the two. Since neither is dated, it is difficult to establish whether one or the other represents an evolution of the proposal, although the order in which the documents are arranged in within the archival file potentially indicates that the lengthier report was likely received later.

³⁰³ Schneider, “*Hasdarat ‘Inyanei ‘Avoda*,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

³⁰⁴ See: Rokach, “*Ptiha*,” LMA, IV-320-11.

According to this theory, a swift equalization of wages would be economically disastrous. as populations with lower standards of living were not properly versed in consumption to ensure the continued circulation of capital within the economy. Rather, they would passively squander capital. In the context of Mandatory Palestine and in Schneider's plan for the future Jewish State, this theory of consumption essentially granted license to a continuation of the wage gap between Palestinian Arabs and Jews. That is, until the consumption habits and needs of the lower-income Palestinian population would expand appropriately. In the meantime, Palestinian workers would "of course," be paid a "fair wage, according to [their] needs."³⁰⁵

The solutions Schneider proposed to tackle the wage gap were similar to those of his peers. To ensure that new Jewish immigrants, especially, find their place in the labor market, a continued, if modified, "conquest" approach to labor should be considered. Employers would pay equal wages to all according to the "Arab standard," and non-governmental Zionist institutions would supplement the wages of Jewish workers so that they reach a more "appropriate" level.³⁰⁶

Schneider also proposed a segregationist approach to conducting public works in particular, echoing some of the same concerns British officials expressed during the construction of the Haifa harbor.³⁰⁷ As wage discrimination between Arab and Jewish

³⁰⁵ Schneider, "*Hasdarat 'Inyanei 'Avoda*," ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

³⁰⁶ Schneider, "*Hasdarat 'Inyanei 'Avoda*," ISA-no-no-0007e6x. Schneider is insistent that any such subsidies, as well as all funds dedicated to encouraging Jewish immigration, funding settlements, and continuing the conquest of labor, should be sourced from non-governmental Zionist institutions. Funding these activities with government funds and taxpayer money, would no doubt meet resistance among the state's Arab citizens and likely also the United Nations, as it would constitute a breach of the state's obligation to equal treatment of all its citizens.

³⁰⁷ See Chapter 2 above.

workers at the same workplace is “unwanted,” work in “public works, railway[s]... and port[s]” should be allotted to exclusively Jewish or Arab work groups, with the exception of tasks that require special expertise.³⁰⁸

As for preventing the entry of “foreign workers”, Schneider suggested “avoid[ing] policing methods as much as possible, from which arises a smell of racial discrimination and xenophobia and [which] are not likely to improve the relationships between the groups.”³⁰⁹ Instead, he proposed instituting employment bureaus which would assign workers to all public works, most government and municipal jobs, and specific economic branches. The bureaus would exercise control and surveillance primarily through statistical methods, rather than through policing, comparing the numbers of assigned workers in each bureau to the numbers of employees in each workplace, while keeping in-person inspections to a minimum.³¹⁰

All three memoranda show that when faced with the potential of incorporating nearly 500,000 Palestinian Arab citizens into the proposed Jewish state, their authors embraced liberal, progressive rhetoric while remaining bound by, if not committed to, colonial and racial divisions of labor and hierarchies of skill. The three essentially proposed a continuation of policies tied to the principles of Hebrew labor and the conquest of labor – even as those were supposedly disavowed by the politicians who composed Subcommittee C – and endorsed various degrees of segregation in the post-statehood labor market. In keeping with their self-perceptions as part of a progressive

³⁰⁸ Schneider, “*Hasdarat ‘Inyanei ‘Avoda*,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

³⁰⁹ Schneider, “*Hasdarat ‘Inyanei ‘Avoda*,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

³¹⁰ Schneider, “*Hasdarat ‘Inyanei ‘Avoda*,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x. Contrary to Grünbaum, Schneider does suggest separate regional employment bureaus for Arab citizens.

political project, Bonne, Grünbaum, and Schneider portrayed these aspects of their proposals as necessary evils, expressing their discomfort with them. They were also careful to designate what strategies in their view lay beyond the pale. As in the discussions of the Histadrut Executive Committee in 1942, these boundaries were set not only by what was deemed acceptable, but also, and perhaps even primarily, by what was considered possible. The events of 1948 dramatically altered the conditions the memoranda set out to address. Even so, the value of analyzing them goes beyond merely capturing a moment in the development of Zionist thinking about labor, race, political economy, and international politics. These seemingly soon to become irrelevant plans, provide an apt backdrop for the approach the Israeli state eventually adopted towards administering and organizing the radically different demographics, geography, and political economy the Nakba engendered.

Grave Apprehensions

The events of 1947-1949 – the civil war, the regional war, and most crucially the Palestinian Nakba – altered Palestine beyond recognition. Very little of what the UNSCOP plan and the November 29, 1947 United Nations vote on partition had suggested for the land's future remained. There was no Palestinian Arab state. The Jewish state, the State of Israel, the founding of which its first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, declared on May 14, 1948, was considerably larger than the one proposed by UNSCOP, swallowing through military force and armistice agreements roughly half of the Arab state's promised territory. The legal movement across the new state's borders

with its neighbors was heavily restricted and limited. Over 750,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes, leaving only a small minority of about 150,000 who were able to remain in the new state's boundaries or to return to their homes within them in the years following 1948.³¹¹ The refugees included most of the Palestinian urban elites and political leadership. "What remained of the Palestinian people inside the nascent state," Shira Robinson has noted, "was a poorer, more rural, less educated, and largely leaderless shadow of its former self."³¹²

Of course, the "Arab labor problem" which Subcommittee C of the Yishuv's Emergency Committee dealt with, had been radically altered as well. The tragedy of the Nakba had "lifted" the "burden," which the economist Alfred Bonne saw in the inclusion of nearly half a million Palestinian Arabs in the proposed Jewish state, almost entirely.³¹³ So much so, that in the hundreds of pages of archival records documenting responses and discussions of A.L. Grünbaum's "Four Year Development Plan," from 1950, the Palestinian citizens in Israel – the same "Arabs" who had occupied a primary place in his memorandum to the Emergency Committee less than three years prior – are barely mentioned.³¹⁴

³¹¹ This did not mean that there was no illicit movement across these borders. Some Palestinians who fled their homes in what later became Israel during the 1947-1949 war, were able to return in subsequent years. Cohen, *Good Arabs*, Chapter 3; Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*, Chapter 3. Border smuggling was not limited to people, either. Haggai Ram's forthcoming monograph explores the history of drug trafficking through Mandatory Palestine and then through Israel. Basma Fahoum examines the porousness of the Israeli state's borders in her work on the history of tobacco in Palestine/Israel from the late-Ottoman period. See: Haggai Ram, *Intoxicating Zion: A Social History of Hashish in Mandatory Palestine and Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

³¹² Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*, 30.

³¹³ Bonne, "The Problem," ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

³¹⁴ Grünbaum, "He 'arot," ISA-no-no-0007e6x; A. Ludwig, Grünbaum, *Four Years Development Plan of Israel, 1950–1953* (Tel Aviv: Prime Minister's Office, Department of Economic Research, 1950); ISA-PMO-PMO-000d1o6; ISA-PMO-PMO-000vr4k; ISA-PMO-PMO-000vr4k.

Even so, the approach the Israeli state adopted to organizing this much diminished “Arab labor market,” resembled, if anything, the harshest of the policies presented in 1947-1948 to Subcommittee C. The state’s policies seemed to bring together the gamut of policies which Bonne, Grünbaum, and Schneider rejected as too extreme, too blatantly discriminatory. Those policies from which, in Schneider’s words, “[arose] a smell of racial discrimination and xenophobia.”³¹⁵

Shortly after its independence, the nascent state imposed a military administration upon the Palestinian citizens within it. The military administration, which remained in place until 1966, introduced effective military rule over all Palestinian-majority areas. It included not only a work permit regime and but also imposed severe restrictions on Palestinian citizens’ freedom of movement. As in South Africa, Bonne’s baneful example, the Histadrut, which only grew in power after 1948, did not accept Palestinian citizens as equal members until 1959, and even then allocated their affairs to a separate Arab department.³¹⁶

Since the Histadrut’s labor exchanges were not nationalized and there were no Palestinian Histadrut members until 1959, during the 1950s the Ministry of Labor reluctantly opened a small number of dedicated labor exchanges for Palestinians. In addition to their small number and limited geographical spread, the exchanges were essentially limited to allocating relief work. The military administration thus cooperated

³¹⁵ Schneider, “*Hasdarat ‘Inyanei ‘Avoda*,” ISA-no-no-0007e6x.

³¹⁶ Already during the Mandate period, the Histadrut had made varying efforts to organize Palestinian Arab workers in an affiliated union, which was nonetheless separate from the Histadrut itself, the Palestine Labor League (PLL). This organization continued its activities until the Histadrut’s 1959 decision to accept Palestinians to its ranks. See fn. 347 below.

with the Histadrut and with the Ministry of Labor in limiting Palestinian citizens' access to employment. It was precisely this coalescence of draconian policing, segregation, and exclusion which, as mentioned above, allowed the labor Zionist leadership, now helming the state, to finally pursue a policy of Hebrew labor successfully.³¹⁷

Palestinians in Israel thus found themselves cut off from potential markets for their agricultural produce and their labor, and in dire need of new means for economic survival. By the mid-1950s, work in agriculture and then construction work, primarily in Jewish locales, were by far the most widespread forms of wage-labor among Palestinian citizens, employing mainly men. In both, they found themselves competing for low wages primarily with Mizrahi Jewish immigrants, discriminated against, housed in transit camps or settled in remote areas, and "channeled into unskilled manual labor," but nonetheless given distinct precedence by authorities over Palestinian citizens.³¹⁸

The state's first decade also brought forth the near disappearance of the "Hebrew construction worker," which members of the Histadrut Executive Committee's Secretariat so feared in 1942 – at least as they likely imagined such a worker. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the forced migration of most Palestinians during the 1947-1949 war and the influx of European and Mizrahi Jews in

³¹⁷ Khalidi, *The Arab Economy in Israel: The Dynamics of a Region's Development*, 34-49, 145; Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy of Israel*, 34-42; Zeev Rosenhek, "The Political Dynamics of a Segmented Labour Market: Palestinian Citizens, Palestinians from the Occupied Territories and Migrant Workers in Israel," *Acta Sociologica* 46, no. 3 (September 2003): 234-238; Lockman, "Land, Labor and the Logic of Zionism," 28. For studies which have dealt more broadly with the experiences of Palestinian citizens in Israel during these initial decades and with the state's mechanisms of control through a variety of analytical frameworks, see: Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*; Adel Manna, *Nakba and Survival: The Story of the Palestinians Who Remained in Haifa and Galilee, 1948-1956* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Van Leer Institute Press and ha-Kibbutz ha-Meuhad Publishing House, 2017) and the works cited in fn. 44 above.

³¹⁸ Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, 304-305.

the 1950s into the new Israeli state, rendered large-scale construction projects an urgent priority across Israel/Palestine. The Israeli government initiated the construction of “development towns” (*‘ayarot pituah*), new neighborhoods, agricultural settlements, and supposedly-temporary “transit camps” (*ma‘abarot*) within its new boundaries in the 1950s and 1960s, to house immigration waves that tripled the country’s Jewish population.³¹⁹

During the same period, the archetypal European Jewish Zionist “pioneers,” the ideal subjects of the then hegemonic labor Zionist movement, continued their withdrawal from physical labor in construction. The pre-state era ideals of Hebrew labor and building the land,” which had made construction a contested and ideologically celebrated line of work, remained in place. However, in line with the new state’s developing division of labor, the task of carrying out these ideals was rapidly racialized, falling to the state’s most marginalized populations.

First, construction drew in Mizrahi Jews, who by 1957 made up roughly 40% of the industry’s workforce. These new immigrants, which the new state’s leadership largely perceived as “backwards” and “primitive,” were tasked with carrying the mantle of “Hebrew labor,” partially in the name of their own “development” and “physical regeneration.”³²⁰ Then, when the Jewish sector reached full employment in the late

³¹⁹ As mentioned in the introduction as well, at the same time, the need to shelter hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and neighboring countries, led to the construction of a network of refugee camps. Ostensibly temporary, like the immigrant transit camps within Israel, as refugeehood became increasingly the Palestinian “norm” (constituting part of what is referred to as the “ongoing Nakba,” *al-Nakba al-Mustamirra*), Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and beyond grew into distinct urban formations. See footnotes 15 & 16 above.

³²⁰ Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries*; Bernstein and Swirski, “The Rapid Economic Development of Israel.” For the data regarding the percentage of Mizrahi Jews (classified under the heading of “Asian & African born”) in different industries, see fn. 21 above.

1950s, the construction industry increasingly came to depend also on Palestinian citizens. By 1962 Palestinian citizens were roughly twice as likely as Jewish citizens to be employed in construction. By 1971, they were roughly three times as likely.³²¹ Israel's division of labor after 1948 thus appeared more and more like the colonial ones which labor Zionists had for so long outwardly disavowed. This disavowal had been throughout the Mandate almost always conditional, its pursual deferred. "Now," was almost never the right time to decline the benefits afforded by virtue of proximity to whiteness in a racially ordered world, or to refuse exclusionary and exploitative policies, even if they raised "grave apprehensions."

³²¹ Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, 304-305; Rosenhek, "Political Dynamics."

CHAPTER 4: “WILL YOUR GOVERNMENT BE TAKING THEM TOO?” POLITICAL ECOLOGIES AND ECONOMIES OF STONE, 1948-1964

In the years immediately following 1948, the stone quarries to the south of the Palestinian villages of Bi‘na, Deir al-Assad, Majd al-Krum, and Nahf (henceforth the Shaghur Valley quarries, although they are often referred to separately in various sources), became a point of contention and contestation between locals, the nascent Israeli state, competing labor unions, and several commercial operations. The quarries were located primarily in an area which local landowners had previously leased to the Mandate government during the final years of British rule, for the purpose of military training, but which under the new Israeli state became the target of competing ownership claims.³²² Evidence as to whether all or some of the quarries were active prior to the lease to the Mandate government is vague. However, as early as 1949, locals who had previously relied primarily on agricultural production or on wage-labor in Palestine’s urban centers, began independently operating or working as wage-laborers in several of the quarries. The quarries then became their primary source of livelihood.³²³

³²² TNA: FO 371 (Foreign Office: General Correspondence from 1906-1966)/111060, “Memorandum of Protest to His Excellency the President of the State of Israel regarding the Usurpation of Lands of the Two Israeli Arab Villages Be’ni (sic.) and Deir-el-Assad, in Western Galilee by the Government of Israel,” February 16, 1954.

³²³ TNA: FO 371/111060 “Memorandum of Protest”; Letter from Y. Shimoni to the Registrar of Cooperative Associations, February 27, 1951, ISA-moital-moital-0011qgi; Letter from residents of Nahf to the Advisor on Arab Affairs in the Prime Minister’s Office, August 1, 1952, ISA-PMO-ArabAffairsAdvisor-000fq6j. Interview with Hanna Ibrahim, Bi‘na, October 22, 2018.

In their search for new sources of income in the aftermath of 1948, the residents of the Shaghur valley villages were not unlike many of their Palestinian peers elsewhere. The Palestinian Nakba brought with it the forced migration of roughly 750,000 Palestinians and the near complete destruction of Palestinian urban life. In its wake, the nascent Israeli state imposed a military administration upon the roughly 150,000 Palestinian citizens who were able to remain within or return to the newly established state in the years following 1948 and who, for the most part, eventually became Israeli citizens. The military administration introduced severe restrictions on Palestinian citizens' movement and employment. Palestinians in Israel thus found themselves cut off from potential markets for their agricultural produce and their labor, and in dire need of new means of economic subsistence.

Examining the history of the Shaghur quarries after 1948, alongside several other quarries in the newly formed Israeli state, this chapter returns once again to the material and site which stood at the center of Chapter 2: stone and the quarry. This chapter examines how a confluence of factors spanning ecology, economy, politics, and race, made quarries into flashpoints between the state, business interests and the country's most marginalized populations. Quarries emerged as such flashpoints as a result of Israel/Palestine's geography and geology, the historical patterns of Zionist colonization, the ability of some Palestinians to remain within the new Israeli state despite the Nakba and the geographical location of those that remained, the attempts of the Israeli state to continue Zionism's conquest of stone with the tools and power now available to it, and ongoing processes of racialization of physical labor.

Like other forms of physical labor, quarry work, which as Chapter 2 has shown was already racialized under British rule, became during the 1950s and 1960s further identified with Palestinian citizens and Mizrahi Jews. As this chapter will demonstrate, the realities of work and life in and around the quarry, were often brutal – marked by exploitation and precarity. At the same time, the quarry and the relationships forged with and within it, allowed these marginalized communities to rearticulate their self-perceptions and shore up their material circumstances in the wake of traumatic dislocation. The chapter concludes by investigating how quarries as Palestinian and Mizrahi spaces left an indelible, if underrecognized, mark on Palestinian culture and played a pivotal role in early representations of Mizrahi Jews.

Stubborn Formations

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Israeli state carried out massive construction of housing and infrastructure. These building enterprises, carried out by public and private contractors, were intended to “absorb” incoming immigrants, and strengthen the state’s hold over its territory. This was particularly true in territories which UNSCOP’s partition plan had originally designated as part of the future Arab state, where even in the aftermath of the Nakba, Palestinians often still constituted a majority. The state’s construction frenzy proved a catalyst for the introduction of skilled Palestinian construction workers into the “Jewish” labor market as early as 1949. It also created a growing need for construction materials such as cement, stone, and quicklime.³²⁴

³²⁴ TNA: FO 371/75268.

To obtain the latter two materials in particular, the Israeli state found itself uncomfortably entangled with, if not dependent upon, the Palestinians who remained within its boundaries and were now its citizens. This dependency was equally rooted in how Mandate Palestine's stone industry took shape, and in the events and aftermath of 1948 and the Nakba. While Zionist attempts to monopolize other crucial production sectors during the mandate were often successful, effectively laying the infrastructural and economic foundations for the Israeli state, the "conquest of stone" (*kibush ha-even*) still remained from a Zionist standpoint, perilously incomplete.³²⁵

As I have argued in the second chapter, the reasons for this failure were varied. Unlike cement production or electrification, Zionist efforts to enter quarrying and stone production during the Mandate, encountered an already established Palestinian quarrying industry which was not only relatively technically advanced, but also owned much of the stone-rich land where quarries could be opened. Thus, even the largest Zionist stone enterprise at the time, the Even va-Sid company, began as a partnership with Palestinian capitalists. In addition, Palestinian quarry and stone workers had better knowledge, skills, and expertise than their Jewish counterparts. In the initial years of "the conquest of stone," Jewish quarry workers had, for the most part, learned the trade by apprenticing under Palestinian masters. British racial thinking about the "inherent" laboring capacities of Arabs and Jews, which associated the former with the hard, physical labor required in quarrying and the latter with more "technical" work, limited Jewish work on government-

³²⁵ See Chapter 1 regarding the Neshet Cement Company's monopoly over cement production during the Mandate and beyond. For the history of another industrial endeavor which the Zionist movement successfully monopolized, electrification, see: Meiton, *Electrical Palestine*; Shamir, *Current Flow*.

operated quarries. Finally, the Zionist turn to quarry mechanization only produced limited success.

The territorial patterns of Zionist colonization also structured the post-1948 stone quarrying industry. The pattern of Zionist land purchase during the years prior to the establishment of the state, generated a by now widely recognized overlap of high-quality agricultural soil and the Zionist so-called “N’ of settlement” (figs. 4.1 and 4.2). At the same time, it also generated a significant mismatch: the areas of Mandate Palestine where the Zionist Yishuv owned land privately and collectively on the eve of 1948 – at the height of their pre-state expansion – were almost entirely misaligned with the land’s limestone deposits (fig 4.3).

As part of the Nakba, Zionist forces drove out the Palestinian residents of some limestone rich areas which Israel was then able to include within its boundaries, particularly in the so-called “Jerusalem corridor.” This made it considerably easier for state authorities to facilitate the exploitation of deposits there.³²⁶ However, the two areas

³²⁶ Indeed, Deir Yassin, the site of what was perhaps the most notorious massacre of the Nakba, and Lifta, a village whose “remains” have become one of the most iconic physical symbols of the devastation wrought upon Palestinian society during and since the Nakba, were both important nodes in the region’s quarrying industry. For a sense of the extent of the depopulation of the stone-rich Jerusalem corridor as a result of the Nakba, compare the lithographic map below (map 3) to the map documenting depopulated Palestinian locales published by the *Zochrot* organization. “Nakba Map,” *Zochrot* <https://zochrot.org/en/site/nakbaMap> [last accessed: June 15, 2020]. Rana Barakat, “Lifta, the Nakba, and the Museumification of Palestine’s History,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 1–15.

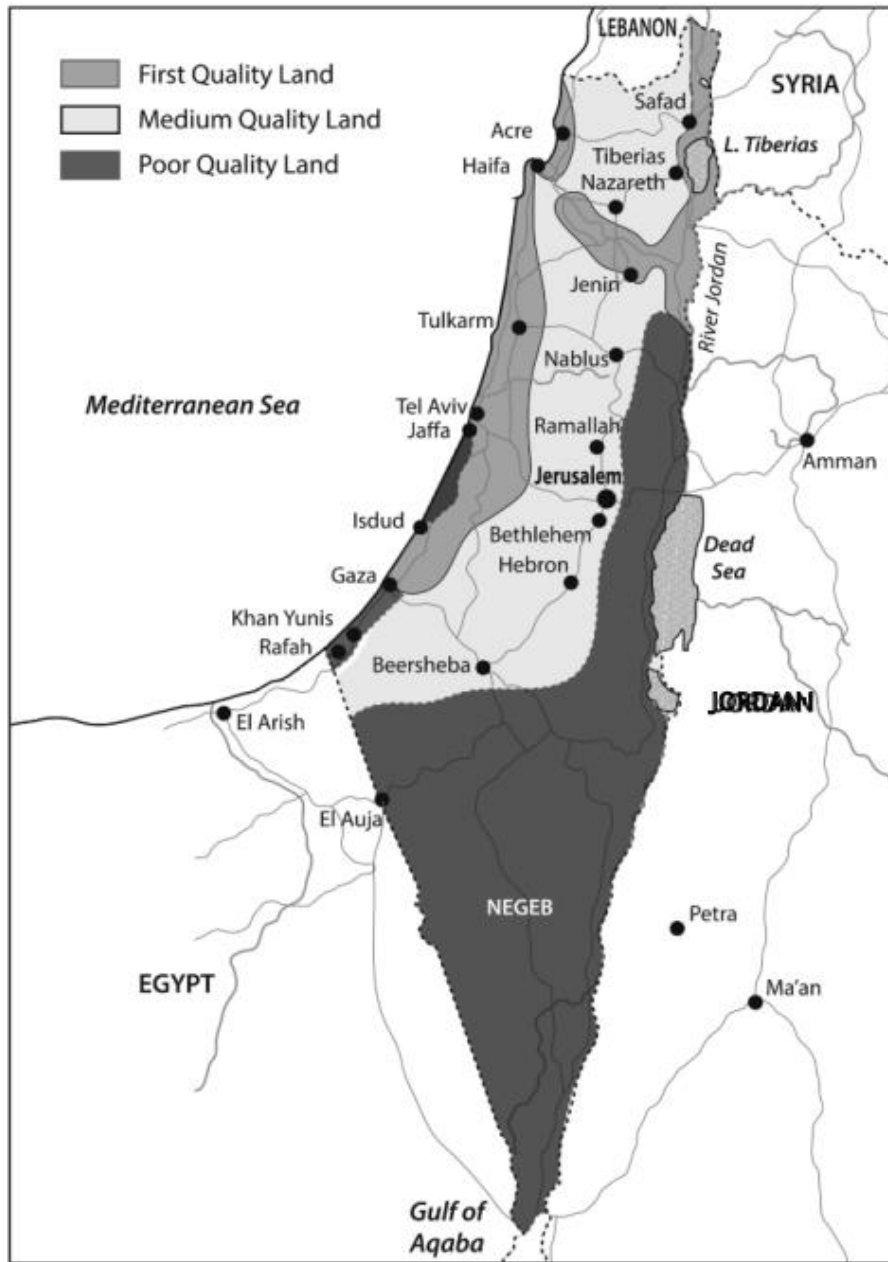


Fig. 4.1 Classification of soil map. Sami Hadawi "MAP H: Palestine: Classification of Soil," *Palestinian Rights and Losses in 1948: A Comprehensive Study* (London: Saqi Books, 1988), p. 200. Copied from Aida Asim Essaid, *Zionism and Land Tenure in Mandate Palestine* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 7.

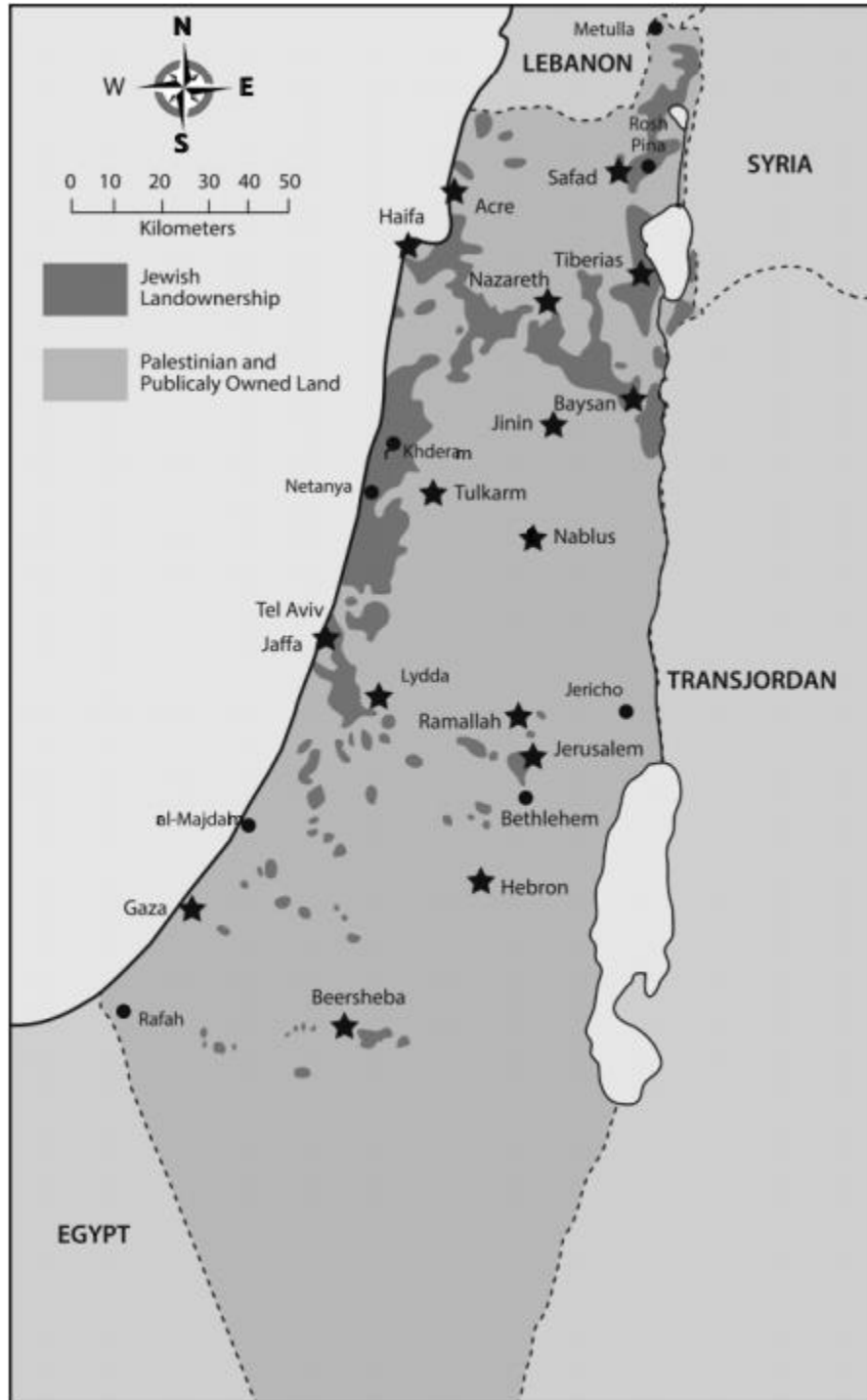


Fig. 4.2. Map of Jewish-owned land in Palestine c. 1947. From Aida Asim Essaid, *Zionism and Land Tenure in Mandate Palestine* (London: Routledge, 2014), 7. Based on "Jewish Owned Land in Palestine as of 1947," [palestineremembered.com](https://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Maps/Story571.html) <https://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Maps/Story571.html>.

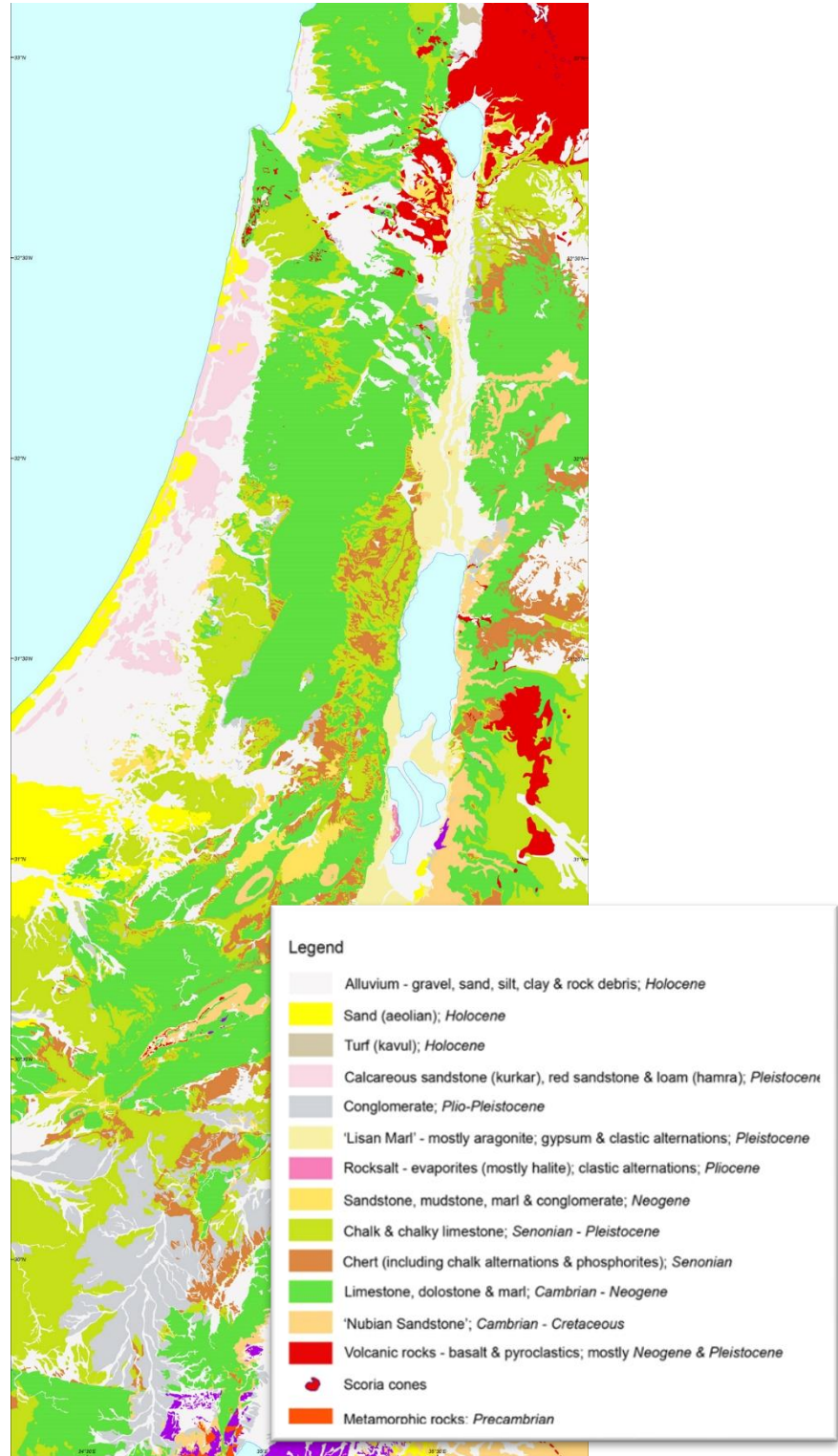


Fig. 4.3. Lithologic map of Israel and Environs with Legend. Copied from A. Sneh, M. Rosenshaft, 2014, "Major Exposed Lithologic Units of Israel and Environs (1:500,000)," Geological Survey of Israel <http://gsi.gov.il/?CategoryID=698&ArticleID=1768>.

of the state in which there remained a Palestinian majority, the Galilee and the so-called Triangle area (Arabic: *al-Muthalath*, Hebrew: *ha-Meshulash*), an area spanning from Kafr Qassem in the south to Wadi 'Arra in the north, were also home to the majority of limestone deposits within its boundaries.

In the years immediately following 1948, this underlying geology was crucial not only because the Israeli state had to contend with the absorption of unprecedented waves of Jewish immigration, as mentioned above, but also with a cyclical and acute shortage of cement, which lasted at least until mid-1951. It soon became apparent that both the production of the local Nesher Cement Company, still a monopoly at the time, and cement imports in a time of global shortage, would not be able to satiate the construction boom's needs. The emergent practice of settling Jewish immigrants in so-called "abandoned" Palestinian villages and neighborhoods, could only partially meet the state's settlement needs and plans. Planning officials suggested three solutions, to be pursued in parallel: the first, was to hasten the long-delayed establishment of a second cement factory. The second solution was to adopt and develop new building techniques. The third solution was to adapt local Palestinian construction techniques. Both the new techniques and the adapted local ones, the committee members suggested, would shift construction's dependency from cement, back to stone. Accordingly, they would also necessitate increased quarry production.³²⁷

³²⁷ "Va'ada Beinmisradit le-Hakirat Ba'ayot ha-Bniya" [Interoffice Committee for the Investigation of Construction Problems], 1947-1951, ISA-PMO-PMO-000vdf9; "Mikhrot u-Masrefot Sid – Taybeh" [Mines and Limekilns – Taibe], 1950-1952, ISA-moch-moch-000qeye; "Emek 'Iron (Vadi 'Ara) - Mahtzevot" ['Iron Valley (Wadi 'Ara) – Quarries], 1950-1951, ISA-moch-moch-000qeye.

Conditions of Exploitation

This coalescence of material shortages and geological conditions had considerable effects on the lives of the Palestinians in the Galilee and the Triangle, on Mizrahi Jewish immigrants, and on the state's extractive policies. The drastic curtailment of the economic horizons of Israel's largely agricultural Palestinian citizenry, the imposition of a military administration, and the attendant restrictions on their movement and employment, had radically changed many Palestinians' relationship to their environment. Where in many places agricultural lands were seized and agricultural trade became unviable, quarries offered a local source of livelihood, whether as independent, and frequently unlicensed, quarry operators, or as wage-laborers. The state, in turn, tried to gain dominance over stone production by turning to land expropriation, discriminatory license-granting for quarry operation, and a continued emphasis on pre-state policies of Hebrew labor – effectively granting preference to the livelihood of Jewish citizens over that of Palestinian ones.³²⁸ The government Custodian of Absentee Property, an office ostensibly set up to handle the properties of Palestinians considered legally “absent,” played a significant role in the state's attempts to gain control and administer Palestinian owned quarries.³²⁹ Alongside the State Assets' Department of the Treasury Ministry and the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the Custodian was charged with devising the conditions of quarry operation leases.³³⁰ The Custodian's role was not limited to expropriating

³²⁸ Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy in Israel*, 46-57.

³²⁹ For the history of the Custodian in its initial years, see: Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998 [1986]); Michael R. Fischbach, *Records of Dispossession: Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

³³⁰ “*Mahtzavim u-Mahtzevot, Taf Shin Yud Bet-Taf Shin Yud Gimel*” [Minerals and Quarries, 1951-1953], CZA KKL5\20716.

Palestinian lands. It also provided enterprising Jewish quarriers with the “abandoned” machinery of Palestinian quarries.³³¹

As far as the labor itself was concerned, the racial division of labor in the quarries, which British racial thinking undergirded during the Mandate period, by and large continued. Jewish employers in the new state often showed a distinct preference for Palestinian workers. This was not solely because of their greater experience and skill, but also because as mostly “unorganized” laborers, excluded from the Histadrut until 1959, Palestinians were made extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Contemporary reports about quarry operators’ employment practices detail a wide range of abuses: from low pay and the continued holding back of wages, to what some contemporary reports described as “disgraceful conditions of exploitation” (*tna’ei nitzul mahpirim*) of Palestinian workers, including women and children, and employers’ “reign of terror” (*mishṭar shel ṭeror*) over employees who threatened to expose such practices.³³²

Ministry of Labor officials occasionally attempted to bridge the need to protect the rights of Palestinian workers on the one hand, and the policy of increasing Jewish employment, on the other, but often granted precedence to the production imperatives of quarry operators. Some operators even successfully argued for the continued employment of low-paid “Arab labor” as a temporary measure intended to establish their enterprises’

³³¹ ISA-moch-moch-000qeye: Emek-Hefer Cooperative for Cargo Transit Ltd. to the Custodian of Absentee Property, December 20, 1950; Custodian of Absentee Property Department of Finances to the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance Department of Employment, December 13, 1950.

³³² Yehoshua Govrin to S. Cohen, March 13, 1950, ISA-PMO-ArabAffairsAdvisor-000fq6j; Y. Havushi to Avraham Malul, February 27, 1950, ISA-moital-DepDirEmployment-000yza2; Sarah Osatzki-Lazar, “*Mi-Histadrut ‘Ivrit le-Histadrut Yisra’elit: Hishtalvutam shel ‘Aravim ba-Irgun, 1948-1966*” [From Hebrew Histadrut to Israeli Histadrut: the Incorporation of Arabs in the Organization, 1948-1966], *Iyunim bi-Tekumat Yisrael* 10 (2000): 381-419.

profitability. After profitability was assured, they promised, they would be able to meet the mandated quota of 50% “Hebrew labor.”³³³ Discriminatory arrangements supported by economic calculations were not only the province of small employers. At least until late 1954, Even va-Sid – by far the largest quarrying operation at the time – refused to provide Palestinian workers with employment conditions and wages equal to their Jewish peers. The company argued that since no other quarry operators had done so, they could not afford to “bear the costs” of pioneering such equality.³³⁴

Even when Jewish workers were introduced to the quarries, quarry labor often remained racialized, albeit differently so. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s the Jewish workforce in the quarries – and in physical labor in the construction industry in general – became increasingly *Mizrahi*. Quarry operators were encouraged specifically to employ recently arrived Mizrahi Jewish immigrants settled in transit camps (*ma‘abarot*), in “abandoned” Palestinian villages, and in other forms of settlements located near their quarries.³³⁵ In part, this too was a matter of geography and geology, seemingly detached from the labor itself: the story of state-directed Mizrahi settlement in these decades was intimately linked with the policy of “Judaizing” areas of the state which, prior to 1948,

³³³ A. Doron to Y. Nudelman, November 9, 1951, ISA-moch-moch-000qeye.

³³⁴ Even va-Sid Co. Ltd. to Haifa Workers’ Council, July 4, 1954, LMA, IV-250-27-4-457. For other examples of reports of exploitation of Palestinian workers or refusal to grant them holiday pay in defiance of a Haifa Workers’ Council decision by Even va-Sid, see: LMA, IV-250-27-4-456: Even va-Sid Co. Ltd. to Hisadrut Executive Committee, November 7, 1949; Even va-Sid Co. Ltd. to Haifa Workers’ Council, November 7, 1949; George Sa’ad to Fuerstein of the Tel Aviv Construction Workers’ Association, July 1, 1954, LMA, IV-219-427.

³³⁵ Y. Nudelman to the Inspector of Inventory in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, April 13, 1951; ISA-moch-moch-000px9x: ISA-moch-moch-000qeye; Y. Nudelman to Military Governor of the Central District, March 6, 1951; Y. Nudelman to the Military Governor of the Central District, August 8, 1951.

had been and often still were, largely Palestinian.³³⁶ And it was these areas, as we have seen, which were richest in building stone deposits.

However, in areas of the Palestinian-dominated Triangle and Galilee as well as in the corridor along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, the Jewish agency also established designated “quarriers’ villages” (*kfarei hotzvim*) in particularly stone-rich areas.³³⁷ These quarriers’ villages were most frequently populated primarily by Mizrahi Jews. This decision was justified through racializing – and often self-contradictory – discourse, much of which can be traced back to the Mandate period and, in the case of Yemeni Jews, as far back as the turn of the century Yavnieli mission.³³⁸

Thus, for example, when discussing work in the quarries, writers in the Hebrew press often depicted Kurdish Jews, such as those settled in Ma‘oz Tzion, a settlement established in 1951 on the ruins of the Palestinian village of al-Qastel en route to Jerusalem, who dominated the quarries of the Qastel, as the ideal hard-laborers: culturally primitive but strong-headed and able-bodied.³³⁹ Others, meanwhile, depicted Yemeni Jews almost as Kurdish Jews’ diametric opposite – as if “all spirit, and no body. Like fireflies,” one contemporary journalist opined, while another described an innate Yemeni fear of “mountains and their shadows.”³⁴⁰ Others still, however, depicted Yemeni Jews as

³³⁶ Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), especially Chapter 9; Falah, “Israeli ‘Judaization’ Policy in Galilee.”

³³⁷ S. Ben-Shemesh to the Office of Economic Planning, Rehovot, January 21, 1953.

³³⁸ See Introduction above.

³³⁹ “*Ha-Hotzvim ‘al ha-Qastel* [The Quarriers on the Qastel],” *Davar*, June 5, 1951; “*Kfar Hotzvim Mukam be-Yerushala ‘im* [A Quarriers’ Village is Being Established in Jerusalem],” *Herut*, April 24, 1952.

³⁴⁰ “*Ha-Hotzvim ‘al ha-Qastel* [The Quarriers on the Qastel],” *Davar*, June 5, 1951; Rafael Bashan, “*Mi Hem 5000 ha-Nodedim be-Kvishei ha-Medina ‘im Mitaltelim Dalim u-Levush Bale?* [Who are the 5000 Wandering the State’s Roads with Scant Belongings and Worn Clothing?],” *Yedi ‘ot Aharonot*, December 14, 1951.

extremely hard-working, with little to no material needs, and so inherently acquiescent they were unlikely to express any material demands. As such, Yemeni Jews were in fact excellent candidates to be settled in the often isolated quarriers' villages, such as 'Atzmon in the north, Tirat Yehuda and Hadid along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, and others. There they could carry out work which would improve their physical state, and which few others wanted to do.³⁴¹

The Right to the Quarry

In this context, the history of the Shaghur valley quarries in the Western Galilee stand out for multiple reasons. First, the struggle over them was prolonged and the Palestinian laborers, quarry owners, and activists who challenged the state over their right to the quarry were relatively well organized. The struggle was also widely publicized, reverberating, as we shall see, even internationally. Second, the struggle over the Shaghur valley quarries fueled some of the most incisive contemporary Palestinian critiques of Israeli state policy beyond those articulated by relatively well-known figures, such as communist Members of Knesset Tawfiq Tubi and Imil Habibi (sometimes rendered as Emile Habiby), or the lawyers and activists Hanna Naqara and Elias Kusa. Third, the Shaghur quarries quickly became well-known for the exquisite quality of their limestone deposits. Initially considered by Israeli authorities as an excellent and abundant source for much-needed gravel, by 1956 the quarries were being hailed in the Hebrew press as a treasure trove of marble of unrivaled quality. This meant that large contractors such as

³⁴¹ "*Ha-Teymanim Halalu* [These Yemenis]," *Davar*, November 11, 1951.

the Histadrut's Solel Boneh company, the privately-owned Company for the Development of Quarries in Israel (*ha-Hevra le-Pituah Mahtzavot be-Yisrael*), and small-time entrepreneurs alike, all vied for a share in their exploitation.³⁴² Finally, the struggle over the Shaghur quarries left an indelible, if underrecognized, mark on Palestinian culture and conceptions of what it means to be proudly, defiantly, and politically Palestinian, and of a specifically Palestinian connection to the materiality of the land of Palestine/Israel.

As noted above, the Palestinians of the Shaghur valley began working the regional quarries as early as 1949, primarily through local initiative, but also as hired labor.³⁴³ Archival evidence suggests that the earliest attempt to organize among local workers took place in early 1951, when workers founded a cooperative quarry workers' association in Bi'na, backed by the local branch of the communist-affiliated labor union, the Arab Workers Congress (AWC) (Arabic: *Mu'atamar al-'Umal al-'Arab*, Hebrew: *Congress ha-Po'alim ha-'Arvim*). However, organization efforts among the workers seem to have begun in earnest even earlier, as a response to the establishment of a quarry by the Israeli government's Public Works Department (PWD).

While he provides no specific date for the events, the poet and novelist Hanna Ibrahim (b. 1927) recalls in his memoirs that when the PWD began operating the quarry, it employed "70 Jewish workers from Acre, but not a single individual from Bi'na, aside from the night guard, who was coincidentally the son of the owner of the land, and whose

³⁴² Letter from the Haifa District Engineer to the head of the Public Works Department in Tel Aviv, June 20, 1951, ISA-comptroller-StateInstitutions-00036rs; Y. Ori, "Ba-Galil ha-'Elyon Hotzvim Shaish [In the Upper Galilee they are Quarrying Marble]," *la-Merhav*, February 2, 1956, p. 2.

³⁴³ See fn. 323.

employment was one of the conditions of the lease [to the PWD].” In response to the exclusion of Palestinians from the quarry’s workforce, the local branch of the AWC decided to organize “a different kind of demonstration (*muzahara min nau‘ akhir*).” Instead of an ordinary demonstration to demand work, they would go to “conquer the labor (*li-iḥtilal al-‘amal*)” in the quarry. Ibrahim recalls that as soon as the AWC issued its decision to attempt such a conquest of labor, “more than fifty workers, some of whom were carrying what work tools they had,” went to the PWD quarry and “simply” asked for work, “just like that” (*hakadha bi-basaṭa*). While the director of works in the quarry could not offer work to all the individuals who arrived that day, an arrangement was reached whereby twelve of those who were in greatest need began working in the quarry. This “partial victory,” as Ibrahim describes it, further cemented the AWC’s already growing role in the village.³⁴⁴

In early 1951, several Bi‘na residents who had been employed in a quarry operated by a Jewish resident of Haifa since 1949, established the Bi‘na Cooperative Association for Quarry Workers. The Haifa resident operated a quarry on land in the Shaghur valley which he was leasing from its Palestinian owners. The organizers of the

³⁴⁴ Hanna Ibrahim, *Shajarat al-Ma‘arifa: Dhikrayat Shabb lam Yatagharab* [Tree of Knowledge: Memoirs of a Boy Who Did Not Go into Exile], third edition (Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1996), 144-145. By adopting this approach, Bi‘na residents were not only repurposing the Zionist concept of the “conquest of labor” to their own ends, but, whether knowingly or not, also building upon pre-1948 Palestinian attempts to promote a struggle for Arab labor such as in the Migdal Tzedek (*Majdal al-Sadiq*) quarries in 1946. See: LMA, IV 219-238. It should also be noted that not all Shaghur valley residents appear to have been pleased with the AWC’s growing involvement in the region. In a letter to the Advisor on Arab Affairs in the Prime Minister’s office, individuals from the village of Nahf complained not only of Jewish stone merchants who were pressuring Nahf’s quarry operators to lower the price of stone to unreasonably low rates, but also about pressures from the Bi‘na AWC who “guaranteed” the quarry operators they would obtain the necessary licenses for them, but only if they all joined the AWC and began paying dues. Letter from residents of Nahf to the Advisor on Arab Affairs in the Prime Minister’s Office, August 1, 1952, ISA-PMO-ArabAffairsAdvisor-000fq6j.

Cooperative Association hoped that operating their own quarry as a cooperative would provide an alternative to the poor pay and harsh conditions work as hired labor in the Haifa resident's operation offered.

The Cooperative's organizers first applied to register their association in late January 1951. In his recommendation to the Registrar of Cooperative Associations in the Ministry of Labor to approve the Cooperative's registration, Y. Shim'oni of the Ministry of Labor described the low rates which the quarry operator paid the locals for their labor. These rates, Shim'oni reported, were paid on a piecework basis, and effectively guaranteed the quarry operator a "one-hundred percent profit." At the same time, the piecework method itself, "[exploited] every movement of the laborer and [strained] him to produce maximal output and to use what [remained] of his strength over unlimited work hours." No longer willing to accept such treatment, Shim'oni writes, the workers broke away from their employer and started operating a quarry independently on land owned by another Bi'na resident. Now, inspired by the AWC branch in the village, they wished to register as a cooperative association so as to continue the operation of their quarry.³⁴⁵

Following Shim'oni's recommendation, the process of registering their association seemed to go relatively smoothly. By mid-March 1951 the Cooperative was successfully registered. Obtaining a license to operate the quarry, however, proved considerably more difficult. When the workers had first applied for a license in late January 1951, the Nahariya district governor demanded they first register as a

³⁴⁵ Y. Shimoni to the Registrar of Cooperative Associations, February 27, 1951, ISA-moital-moital-0011qgi.

cooperative association and provide him with a list of all association members and their roles, which the organizers promptly did. However, as a May 1951 letter from Yussef ‘Abdu, Secretary of the Union of Cooperative Associations of Arabs in Israel, another AWC-affiliated operation, reveals, neither meeting these conditions, nor meeting any further stipulations presented by the governor seemed to have had much effect.

According to ‘Abdu, in late April that year, the governor flatly refused to grant the Bi‘na Cooperative Association for Quarry Workers a license to operate, without further explanation. By 1954, the Association seems to have completely ceased operation, at least in any official capacity.³⁴⁶

Other quarries in the Shaghur region saw different kinds of struggles during the early 1950s. At the Solel Boneh quarry, for example, the company’s quarry manager conditioned workers’ employment on their leaving the AWC and joining the competing labor union, the Palestine Labor League (PLL), a Histadrut-affiliated union intended to organize Palestinian workers.³⁴⁷ By early 1954, it became clear that taken together, these struggles constituted something broader than each single manifestation indicated. It had

³⁴⁶ The events are documented in a file in the Israel State Archives: ISA-moital-moital-0011qgi.

³⁴⁷ “*Lohatzim ‘al Po‘alim ‘Aravim La‘azov et ha-Congress* [Arab Workers are being Pressured to leave the Congress], *Kol ha-‘Am*, December 19, 1952, p. 8; “*Menahel Mahtzavat Solel Boneh be-Bi‘na Me‘argen Provokatzot Neged Mak”i* [The Manager of the Solel Boneh Quarry in Bi‘na Organizes Provocations against the Communist Party],” *Kol ha-‘Am*, January 8, 1953. Hanna Ibrahim recalls being able to keep his job at the Solel Boneh quarry in Bi‘na for all of two weeks before being given the ultimatum of leaving the Communist Party or losing the position. Interview with Hanna Ibrahim, Bi‘na, October 22, 2018. For what is still the defining historical account of both the AWC and the PLL before 1948, see: Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*. For the AWC and its rivalry with the PLL in Israel after 1948, see: Leena Dallasheh, “Nazarenes in the Turbulent Tide of Citizenships: Nazareth from 1940 to 1966” (PhD diss., New York University, 2012); Leena Dallasheh, “Persevering through Colonial Transition: Nazareth’s Palestinian Residents after 1948,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45, no. 2 (February, 2016): 8–23.

become a struggle for the ownership of the quarries and the agricultural lands surrounding them.

“A Chain of Racial Persecution”

In February 1954, Shoukry al-Khazen, the headmaster of the prestigious Orthodox School in Haifa and a political activist, and Boulous Hanna Boulous, one of the larger landowners in the Shaghur region, authored a six-page English-language memorandum, addressed to then Israeli President, Yitzhak Ben Tzvi.³⁴⁸ Signed by over one-hundred and fifty of the landowners of Bi‘na and Deir al-Assad, the memorandum, copies of which Khazen and Boulous sent also to the American and British consulates, meticulously surveyed the historical background for local claims to ownership of the quarries. It described in detail what its authors described as the “four links” of the “chain of racial persecution” the state had unleashed upon the locals.

Citing the 1945 Villages’ Statistical Report issued by the Mandate government, Khazen and Boulous argued that prior to 1948, neither the British nor the Ottoman government laid claim to the lands of either village, as they both recognized the villagers as their sole owners. Land surveys the Mandate authorities conducted in 1931-2 and as recently as 1946, recognized these village-owned lands and categorized them according to their agricultural usage. The memorandum does point out though that unlike its early 1930s precursor, the 1946 survey did not account for land which residents were at the

³⁴⁸ TNA: FO 371/111060, “Memorandum.”

time leasing to the British Army as a training ground. This land, as it happened, was also where the villages' quarries were located.

The British Army, the memorandum states, honored their lease and continued paying their dues to the land's owners until all payments were completed on May 15, 1952, exactly four years after the Mandate was dissolved. The relationship of the villages with the authorities, however, changed radically with the establishment of the State of Israel.

[G]overnment officers began to exercise diverse devices of oppression and persecution against the owners [of the land] to prevent them from working the quarries preparatory to confiscating them.³⁴⁹

It was then that the four "links" of the "chain of racial persecution," began to unfold. If the purpose of this chain was the land's eventual confiscation, what pulled it along from link to link was the dependency of the people of Bi'na and Deir al-Assad on the quarries for their very survival.

First, the government "adamantly and arbitrarily" refused to grant licenses to Palestinian operated quarries (as we have seen above in the instance of the Bi'na Cooperative Association). As a result, the landowners chose to operate according to what the memorandum describes as the "commonplace knowledge that the... competent authorities under the military rule envisaged that no license should be granted to an Arab unless he takes a Jewish partner."³⁵⁰ To get around this unwritten rule, some quarry owners leased their land to Jewish contractors, so that the latter could then apply for the

³⁴⁹ TNA: FO 371/111060, "Memorandum."

³⁵⁰ TNA: FO 371/111060, "Memorandum."

necessary licenses. This, the landowners thought, would enable both them and the laborers from the area to once again earn a living from the quarries, even if it meant sharing some of the profits with the lessees. However, the “second link” of the chain – which at this point the landowners began seeing for what it was – soon appeared.

When, following their agreement with the quarries’ Palestinian landowners, the Jewish lessees first applied to the government for quarrying licenses, government officials instructed them instead to obtain altogether new, separate leases for the same lands. This time, the officials told the lessees, they should obtain leases for these lands not from the local landowners of the Shaghur valley, but from the state, and specifically from what the memorandum refers to as the “Director of the State Domain.” The land, the government officials stated, did not belong to the Palestinians who had leased it to the Jewish operators in the first place – it was state-owned land. Here, for the first time, the government introduced the claim that the state, and not the people of Bi‘na and Deir al-Assad, was the quarries’ rightful owner.³⁵¹

The Jewish contractor-lessees, likely eager to begin working the quarries, complied. They sought separate leases from the state for the lands which they had originally leased from the Palestinian landowners. Sure enough, they soon received the leases, and alongside them the coveted quarrying licenses. Having done so, the contractor-lessees then refused to pay the previously agreed upon rent to the Palestinian

³⁵¹ TNA: FO 371/111060, “Memorandum.” According to a February 3, 1954 article from *Kol ha-‘Am*, which provides a somewhat different narrative of the events, it is likely that the functionary to whom the authors of the memorandum refer to as the “Director of the State Domain,” was in fact the Custodian for Absentee Property. “*Ha-Apotropus u-Va‘alei ha-Hon Menasim Ligzol et ha-Adama shel Toshvei Bi‘na* [The Custodian and the Capitalists are Trying to Pilfer the Land of the People of Bi‘na],” *Kol ha-‘Am*, February 3, 1954.

landowners, let alone share the profits of the quarries' operation. The lessees argued that the new leases signed vis-à-vis the state rendered the previous ones null and void and refused all claims by the landowners otherwise.³⁵²

Following this stage, which Khazen and Boulous define as the “third link” in the “abominable policy of racial oppression,” the local landowners decided to turn to the supreme court in order to challenge the state’s claims of ownership.³⁵³ The supreme court ruled in favor of the Palestinian landowners, denying the state’s claim to the land. However, this did not dissuade the state from further pursuing its claims. Rather, it unleashed the chain’s “fourth link,” as the state turned to a different legal avenue to obtain control of the quarries.³⁵⁴

Seeing that the court would not uphold its claims, the Israeli state filed for a land dispute with its own land dispute arbitration authority, the Land Settlement Department. The Land Settlement Department’s handling of the matter, the memorandum alleges, was in direct contradiction to its intended role as an impartial arbitrator. Its representatives in both villages, made presenting any challenges to the state’s claims extremely difficult for the landowners. The representatives never posted a detailed plan of the lands claimed by the state as required by law. The Department also closed all its local offices throughout the period allotted for filing challenges. Since the residents of the Shaghur valley were all living under the movement restrictions of the military administration, this made filing such challenges considerably more difficult. Finally, when the Land Settlement

³⁵² TNA: FO 371/111060, “Memorandum.”

³⁵³ TNA: FO 371/111060, “Memorandum.”

³⁵⁴ TNA: FO 371/111060, “Memorandum”; *“Ha-Apotropus u-Va ‘alei ha-Hon,” Kol ha-‘Am*, February 3, 1954.

Department appointed a land surveyor to examine the competing claims, it appointed none other than the surveyor of the Custodian of Absentee Property. Unsurprisingly, the appointed surveyor's findings aligned entirely with the state's claims, ignoring those of Palestinian landowners. The "financially able" among the latter, the memorandum states, were forced to go to great expense and hire another surveyor independently to try and challenge the decision.³⁵⁵

Although their understanding of the government's actions as pre-meditated from the get-go may have lent too much credit to the foresight and planning of state authorities and agents, the efficacy of what the memorandum's authors called the racial chain of oppression was undeniable. By the time of the writing of the memorandum, local landowners and laborers alike had suffered considerable economic damage, both by virtue of being unable to work the quarries regularly, and of the expenses which the legal proceedings caused them to incur. While the matter of ownership was still disputed at the time of the memorandum's submission, an assessment of the events which led up to that point provided its authors and over one-hundred and fifty local signatories, with the grounds to present a damning critique of the Israeli state.

This critique was not reliant solely on a systematic presentation of events, but also on carefully selected rhetoric. The rhetorical inventiveness of the authors began with the pointed imagery of the "chain of racial oppression," given body and weight by the description of its different links. Each mention of the chain and its links was underlined

³⁵⁵ TNA, FO 371/111060, "Memorandum."

in the original text. It then culminated with the analysis the memorandum provided of the underlying objectives of the state, which is worth citing in full:

We cannot but conclude from the aforementioned measures that the Government has formulated a policy contemplating our impoverishment by stripping us of our landed properties and by causing us to incur excessive expenses in litigations against individual trespassers and against Government departments endeavouring to take our lands. The picture is becoming gradually clear. It depicts a malicious intention to render us landless, unable to live decently, and to make us wood choppers and water carriers for the children of Israel. We would ultimately become dispersed and destitute and be forced to leave the country to join the army of refugees.³⁵⁶

Khazen and Boulous had already laid out the claim that the state was following a racial policy of oppression throughout. Now, they compounded that accusation by portraying the state's intentions as being to render the Palestinian minority a landless class of "wood choppers and water carriers," and eventually to make them into refugees. This, of course, stood in stark contrast not only to Israel's declared policy towards Palestinian citizens. It also undermined labor Zionism's continued disavowal of what its proponents portrayed as a colonial division of labor, often employing the very same biblical reference as Khazen and Boulous did.³⁵⁷ Lest invocation of such a social order was not pointed enough, the memorandum then moved to directly invoke what Shira Robinson has characterized as the "colonial specter" which haunted the Israeli state in its initial years.³⁵⁸ Here too, they underlined the words to which they wanted to call their readers' attention:

We wish in particular to invite Your Excellency's attention to the great difference between the spirit of justice that characterized the conduct of the settlement

³⁵⁶ TNA, FO 371/111060, "Memorandum."

³⁵⁷ See Chapter 2 and 3 above. For another example, see also: TNA: CO 733/189/3, Letter from Dov Hos to Mr. A.S. Firth of the Trade Unions Council, July 10, 1930.

³⁵⁸ Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*, 49-55.

officers of the Colonial Mandatory Administration and the oppressive attitude of the settlement officers of the democratic State of Israel.³⁵⁹

Fully leaning into the contradictory resonances of the terms “colonial” and “democratic” in the post-World War II era, the memorandum presented its addressee, the Israeli president, as well as the various foreign missions who received copies of the memorandum, with a “clear picture” indeed. Despite its claims to being a democracy, its “alleged desire to live with the Arabs in peace and friendliness,” and “the many sweet promises... for the betterment of the lot of the Arabs of Israel,” Palestinians were finding themselves worse off under the democratic Israel than under its colonial predecessor.

Stone Imprints

In 1964, the fight for the Shaghur valley quarries and agricultural lands was finally lost and the city of Karmiel established in their place. In the ten years which had passed since the landowners of Bi‘na and Deir al-Assad submitted their memorandum to the President, contestation over the quarries took on different forms. Having found that laying legal claims to the lands was not sufficient to prevent the Palestinian landowners and laborers from working the quarries there, however haphazardly, in 1956 the state embraced a different approach. In January of that year, the Israeli Defense Forces’ Chief of Staff declared roughly 100 thousand dunums in the Galilee and additional areas, including most of the Shaghur quarries, a “closed military zone.” Several Jewish operated quarries, such as those of Solel Boneh, were not included within the closed zone and continued to

³⁵⁹ TNA: FO 371/111060, “Memorandum.”

operate unabated. However, Palestinian Shaghur residents who sought to operate their own quarries, or seek work with other Palestinian quarry operators, were forced to face the fact that accessing the lands they still legally owned was now considered a criminal offense. In the eight years prior to Karmiel's eventual establishment, the Shaghur residents went on strike, protested, appealed repeatedly to the Israeli courts, and, when possible, continued to work in the quarries despite the restrictions, risking arrest.³⁶⁰

In 1961, the state officially expropriated over five thousand dunums belonging to the four Shaghur valley villages, previously included in the "closed military zone" and encompassing the quarries. Again, the resistance of the local population was furious and unrelenting, reaching the Israeli Knesset and Supreme Court. Sabri Jiryis described this latter part of the Shaghur struggle as, "quite effective in the long run, since after [K]armiel there were no more expropriations on such a scale."³⁶¹ Yet, the struggle could not save the Shaghur quarries, which in 1964 Karmiel swallowed whole.

My attempts to trace a historical narrative of the Shaghur valley quarries led me on a circuitous path, one which captures the ongoing movement between the material and the metaphorical of Israel/Palestine's stone. In April 2018, I attended a daylong conference on the Palestinian Nakba at George Washington University. I had been conducting research at the United States National Archives in College Park and spending

³⁶⁰ Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, 109-110; "Tnuat Meha'a Hazaqa shel ha-Kafri'im ha-'Aravi'im ba-Galil neged Gezel Admoteihem" [A Strong Movement of Resistance of the Arab Villagers in the Galilee against the Pilfering of their Lands], *Kol ha-'Am*, January 3, 1956; "Si'at Mapam Neged ha-Shetah ha-Sagur" [The MAPAM Party Against the 'Closed Zone'], *Al ha-Mishmar*, January 10, 1956; "Harhavat ha-Shetah ha-Sagur" [The Expansion of the 'Closed Zone'], *Kol ha-'Am*, January 11, 1956; "Tawsi'a 'al-Manatiq al-Mughliqa' fi-Aradi al-Qarawiyin al-'Arab Yusib Nahw 60 Qarya wa-Mustawtanat Yahudia Aidan" [The Expansion of the 'Closed Zone' in the Lands of the Arab Villages will Harm Around 60 Villages as well as Jewish Settlements], *al-Ittihad*, January 13, 1956.

³⁶¹ Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, 109.

considerable time thinking of how to incorporate the history of stonework specifically into my project. Perhaps it was this mindset, the fact that I had seldom heard or read the poem in English before, or both, but when during one of the conferences' panels, the Hebrew literary scholar Hanan Hever recited an English translation of Mahmoud Darwish's "Identity Card" (see Appendix I), the words "quarry" and "rock" in the poem struck me like subsequent thunderbolts.³⁶² There was my "in" into the world of stone, at the heart of one of the most famous Palestinian poems of the twentieth century. The weight of Darwish's quintessential early expression of defiant and political Palestinian-ness, specifically Palestinian masculinity, was carried on the shoulders of a quarry worker and his relationship to the quarry's stones. "Identity Card" was so iconic, so oft cited and discussed, it had never occurred to me to even look.

As I began learning more about the history of quarries in the archives, I adopted "Identity Card," alongside Ehud Ben 'Ezer's 1963 novel, *The Quarry (ha-Mahtzeva)*, as the cultural artefacts I most frequently cited in conversation, to demonstrate how quarries shaped the experiences of the nascent Israeli state's most marginalized populations – Palestinians and Mizrahi Jews.³⁶³ Ben 'Ezer's *The Quarry* is hardly of the caliber of "Identity Card." Whereas Darwish's poem has grown in stature over time, re-inscribed, repeatedly, as a quintessential expression of defiant and political Palestinian-ness, Ben 'Ezer's novel has been, to some extent, forgotten. Nonetheless, it was a pioneering

³⁶² Hanan Hever, "From Revenge to Empathy: Abba Kovner from Jewish Destruction to Palestinian Destruction," paper presented at the George Washington University Institute of Middle East Studies Annual Conference: Nakba, Past and Present, April 13, 2018; Mahmoud Darwish, *The Music of Human Flesh* (selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies) (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980); Mahmoud Darwish, *Awraq al-Zaytun [Olive Leaves]* (Haifa: Matba'at al-Ittihad al-Ta'awuniyya, 1964).

³⁶³ Ehud Ben 'Ezer, *ha-Mahtzeva: ha-Sefer ha-Shalem [The Quarry: The Complete Book]* [Hebrew] Second expanded edition (Tel Aviv: Astrolog, 'Am 'Oved, 2001 [1963]).

attempt in twentieth-century Hebrew literature to depict the lives and struggles of Mizrahi Jews in the nascent state from their point of view. As the Mizrahi author, critic, and political activist Sami Michael stated in a 2002 retrospective review of the novel, Ben ‘Ezer was unique among his generation of authors in his approach to writing about Mizrahi subjects. He wrote of Mizrahi Jews not as an outside onlooker, regarding their life as whole, rather than incomplete or lacking.³⁶⁴

The novel, which was also adapted into a play in 1964 and later a film in 1990, tells the story of power struggles and romantic entanglements in an unnamed quarry and its adjacent “quarrier’s village.” Although his characters’ relationship to the quarry in the novel – for which Ben ‘Ezer drew inspiration from his time as a teacher in Ma‘oz Tzion, near the Qastel Quarry on the route to Jerusalem³⁶⁵ – is not as intimate as that of “Identity Card’s” speaker, work there nonetheless shapes the bodies and lives of the novel’s protagonists. In keeping with the processes of quarry labor’s racialization described above, Ben ‘Ezer portrays spaces which, as the novel progresses, become almost entirely Mizrahi. At the beginning of the novel, Rabinovich, the quarry foreman and the only remaining Ashkenazi man working there, retires. A power struggle then ensues between Moshe David, the protagonist, and the newly appointed foreman, Nissim Levi, whose rivalry with Moshe David dates back to their previous lives in the unnamed Middle Eastern country from which they emigrated. After Rabinovich’s departure, the quarry itself, the nearby village, and even the novel’s urban scenes become effectively

³⁶⁴ Sami Michael, “*ha-Proletar ha-Yahid Notarti, Kamuvan, Ani*,” *Ha’aretz*, May 2, 2002 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.791304> [last accessed: July 1, 2020].

³⁶⁵ Ben ‘Ezer, *ha-Mahtzeva*, 267-270.

segregated from the Ashkenazi Jewish elites, which figure only periodically as an intrusive outside force. Thus, as Sami Michael has noted, the novel's protagonists and antagonists are given room to compete among themselves for power and influence, and the community as a whole, to shake off Nissim Levi's tyrannical rule from within.³⁶⁶

The Quarry is not devoid of orientalist tropes, and sections of it have not aged well. However, like "Identity Card," it nonetheless opens the door onto the forgotten role of quarries at the margins of the nascent Israeli state: spaces where the limits of the state's sovereignty were tested, and where its discriminated-against populations could exercise degrees and forms of autonomy otherwise hard to obtain.

In October 2018, I was conducting oral history interviews in Palestine/Israel. Most of the individuals I interviewed were former construction workers. However, I was also able to locate several former quarry workers who were willing to be interviewed as well. Among these, the poet and author Hanna Ibrahim, who had worked in the Shaghur valley quarries between 1952-1964, was by far the most recognizable name.³⁶⁷ In our conversation at his home in Bi'na, Ibrahim described in detail how during that period, the people of Bi'na, Deir al-Assad, Majd al-Krum, and Nahf struggled against the Israeli government and the military administration to maintain access to the quarries which were their main source of livelihood. But, as the interview revealed, this struggle's place in Palestinian history likely far eclipses anything that a historical narrative about it could possibly capture.

³⁶⁶ Michael, "ha-Proletar ha-Yahid," *Ha'aretz*, May 2, 2002.

³⁶⁷ Interview with Hanna Ibrahim, Bi'na, October 22, 2018.

During our conversation, I asked Ibrahim, as I did others among the former workers I spoke with, for his thoughts about Darwish's quarry worker in "Identity Card," and the quarry as a Palestinian symbol. As soon as I mentioned the poem, Ibrahim said: "He wrote this [the poem], in my name (*huwwa, hay katabha bi-ismi*)... he put himself in my place (*ḥaṭṭ ḥalo maḥalli*)."³⁶⁸ He then began reciting lines from the poem which aligned with his biography:

"I work with my comrades of toil in a quarry... (*wa-a 'amalu ma ' rifaqi al-kadḥi fi maḥjar*)
I have eight children (*wa-abna 'i thamaniyatun*),"³⁶⁹ and actually I had eight children!³⁷⁰

Approaching "Identity Card" anew yet again, its affinities to the narrative of the struggle over the quarries of Bi'na, Deir al-Assad, Majd al-Krum, and Nahf are remarkable. The dependence of the villages on the quarries is captured in the lines: "I have eight children / For them I wrest the loaf of bread / The clothes and exercise books / From the rocks." Nicknamed "red Bi'na" (*bi'na al-ḥamra*'), for the widespread support of its people for the communist party, Bi'na appears as a likely candidate for the village

³⁶⁸ Interview with Hanna Ibrahim, Bi'na, October 22, 2018.

³⁶⁹ Here Ibrahim replaced Darwish's original term – *atfali*, for "my children" – with *abna 'i*.

³⁷⁰ Interview with Hanna Ibrahim, Bi'na, October 22, 2018. Ibrahim also describes his relationship with Darwish, which he discussed in our interview as well, and further elaborates on the affinities between "Identity Card's" protagonist and himself in several recent interviews published online. Unfortunately, I encountered these interviews only after my conversation with him. Muhammad 'Ali Sa'id, "al-Sha'irayn: Mahmoud Darwish wa-Hanna Ibrahim wa-Qissat Sajjil Ana 'Arabi" [The Two Poets: Mahmoud Darwish and Hanna Ibrahim and the story of Write it Down, I am an Arab], *Shomos News Magazine*, August 13, 2015

<http://www.shomosnews.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D9%88%D8%AD%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%85-%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B5/> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]; Hatem Jou'iyya, "Liqa' ma'a al-Sha'ir <<Hanna Ibrahim>>," [An Interview with the Poet Hanna Ibrahim], *Diwan al-'Arab*, July 4, 2016
<http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article44366#.XXKX59JhKhhE> [last accessed: July 1, 2020].

which Darwish describes as “...remote, forgotten / Its streets without name / And all its men in the quarries and fields / Love communism.”³⁷¹ And although talk of the government’s intentions to take “these rocks” which are all that “you left us and all my descendants,” could, as we have seen above, apply to any point in time from the early 1950s onwards, it would have been particularly pressing in 1963, when Darwish’s poem was first published.

To the question, “Will your government take them too?” the state provided its final answer the following year. But while it was eventually able to sever the material binds between the people of the Shaghur valley and the stones for which they struggled, and from which they “wrested bread, clothes and exercise books” for fifteen long years, the government could not sever the affective bond between them. Rather, through Darwish’s poem, this bond has gained a significance spanning well beyond the Shaghur valley, across Israel/Palestine and outwards to the Palestinian diaspora and the international scene. Yet, at the same time, its symbolic power has arguably occluded the

³⁷¹ Interview with Hanna Ibrahim, Bi’na, October 22, 2018. Ibrahim also discusses the moniker in his interview with *Diwan al-‘Arab*: Jou’iyya, “Liqa’.” The line “Love communism” (*yuḥibbun al-shuyu’iyya*) which appeared in the original printing of the poem in the first edition of the volume, *Awraq al-Zaytun* (Olive Leaves) was omitted from later editions. In Denys Johnson-Davies’ English translation the line is left blank, making the verse it appears in the only one in the poem to include an empty line. In a 2013 study, ‘Adel al-Usta explores Darwish’s changing politics and tastes as captured by a variety of such editorial omissions and changes in the various editions of his poems. Referring specifically to the omitted line from “Identity Card,” al-Usta mentions that Darwish’s break with communism drove the decision to alter or remove such references in subsequent editions of his poems. ‘Adel al-Usta, *Jadal al-Shi’r wa-l-Siyasa wa-l-Dha’iqa: Dirasat fi Zahirat al-Hadhaf wa-l-Taghyir fi Ash’ar Mahmoud Darwish* [Disputes of Poetry, Politics and Taste: Studies in the Phenomenon of Omission and Alteration in the Poems of Mahmoud Darwish] (Nablus: 2013); Mahmoud Darwish, *The Music of Human Flesh* (selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies) (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980); Mahmoud Darwish, *Awraq al-Zaytun* [Olive Leaves] (Haifa: Matba’at al-Ittihad al-Ta’awuniyya, 1964). Elliot Colla has generously shared with an unpublished article manuscript which examines “Identity Card” as part of a reconsideration of the significance of Darwish’s early works, which are often derided by critics as poetically “simple” and “straightforward”: Elliot Colla, “The Political was the Poetic: Reading Early Mahmoud Darwish” (unpublished manuscript, July 16, 2019), Microsoft Word file.

material, lived history of attachments which inspired the poem in the first place. Perhaps re-narrating the history of twentieth-century Palestine/Israel, already overdetermined by symbols and meanings, as one in which the semiotic and the concrete are both given due consideration, can prevent us from losing sight of one for the other.

CHAPTER 5: “WE BUILT THIS LAND”: PALESTINIAN CITIZENS IN ISRAEL’S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, 1948–1973

“And what if I told you that... workers slept between the thorns, in the field? Workers would dig [a hole] like a grave and put straw inside. When it rained they would do like this around [Ahmad mimics piling up dirt so that water cannot enter] and put a tin above.”

Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh (b. 1939), 10 October 2018³⁷³

The physical construction of the Israeli state in its initial decades depended not only on the dispossession of Palestinians, as in the Shaghur Valley quarries, but also on their labor. In the decades after Israel’s establishment and the Palestinian Nakba, Palestinian citizens in Israel - a newly constituted minority in their own homeland, reeling from catastrophe and living its aftermath – played a crucial role in the making of the state responsible for their ongoing dispossession. As mentioned in previous chapters, Israel’s initial decades were marked by massive state-directed construction, intended to house unprecedented numbers of Jewish immigrants. Many of these housing projects were built by Palestinian hands, on Palestinian-owned land, and on the ruins of Palestinian cities, towns, and villages.

³⁷² I would like to thank the individuals interviewed for the purpose of this chapter and their families, including those individuals whose narratives are not included here. The experiences of getting to know each of them have been life-altering and eye-opening. Their openness, thoughtfulness, and hospitality towards me have placed me forever in their debt. I would also like to thank the individuals without whose help I would never have met the narrators: Assaf Adiv, Fady Asleh, ‘Issa Boursheh, Leena Dallasheh, Suheil Diab, Basma Fahoum, Anis, Leila and Hanna Khoury, and Shira Robinson.

³⁷³ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ara‘ara, October 10, 2018.

This chapter explores the experiences of Palestinian citizens in Israel's construction industry in the twenty-five years after 1948. The processes through which they became disproportionately represented in such racialized and frequently exploitative labor, both foreshadowed the exploitation of Palestinian subjects from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the Israeli economy after the 1967 war, and resembled patterns of migrant labor exploitation in other settler-colonial contexts.³⁷⁴ As in those instances, these processes were part and parcel of the broader marginalization and exclusion of Palestinian with Israeli citizenship: the imposition of a military administration between 1948-1966, which restricted their movement and employment; massive land expropriation and unequal resource allocation which curtailed possibilities of economic sustenance and development; and purposeful limitations imposed by the state on the construction and development of Palestinian localities. By offering Palestinian citizens "a path to survival,"³⁷⁵ Israel's construction industry enrolled their labor in the service of the very structures that exploited and excluded them in the first place.

These structural elements, recalling John Chalcraft's analysis of hegemony in relation to subaltern groups in his exploration of the dynamics of Syrian labor migration to Lebanon, form the backdrop of this chapter. The chapter's foreground, however, is dedicated primarily to exploring what Chalcraft has described as "the optimism of the story" of hegemony's "invisible cage": how powerful structures, because they require decision-making agency on the part of workers, always leave "a possibility – especially

³⁷⁴ Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel*; Juval Portugali, *Implicate Relations: Society and Space in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1993); Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power."

³⁷⁵ Khalidi, *The Arab Economy*, 145.

in the context of ceaseless structural and social change, fracture, and contradiction – that such agency [be] put to purposes other than those that [work] to reproduce the dominant form of power.”³⁷⁶ I argue that although Palestinian citizens who found work in Israel’s construction industry often did so feeling as though they had little choice, workers and their communities used their place in the industry to circumvent and at times even challenge the Israeli state’s suffocating hold. Through their growing role in building the Jewish state, Palestinian citizens gained skills and knowledge of techniques, materials, and forms of spatial organization which they adapted and introduced into the reconstruction of their homes and towns. These capacities, marshalled in the service of informal arrangements and solutions, were all the more instrumental given the state’s purposeful stifling of Palestinian localities’ development. Still others refused to accept the racialization and dehumanization which marked them as out-of-place and undeserving, and relegated them, at best, to society’s sidelines, hidden in plain sight. Instead, they sought to reclaim their humanity and belonging through various means, including bringing their oppression into the public eye.

To explore these experiences, the chapter relies on oral history interviews conducted with nineteen Palestinian men and women who are former workers, foremen, contractors, labor organizers, and their family members, primarily from the Triangle area and the Galilee.³⁷⁷ These interviews are used alongside archival sources, newspapers, and

³⁷⁶ John Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 231-232.

³⁷⁷ Following the mass forced migration of Palestinians as a result of the Nakba and the establishment of Israel, the Galilee and the Triangle (also known as the Little Triangle) were home to the vast majority of Palestinians who became citizens of the new state. While the Galilee was seized by Israeli armed forces during the 1947-1949 war, the Triangle was annexed in May 1949 in accordance with the armistice agreement signed with Jordan. Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*, 38-40, 84-85.

film. Of the nineteen individuals interviewed, the narratives of thirteen are used here. Following a brief exposition about the narrators and the methodology I used in the interview and analysis process, the chapter first examines the various factors which pushed individuals into the construction industry specifically. Then it looks at the circumstances that surrounded work-life – commuting, dwelling, and the relationship to family, community, and home. At the center of my analysis of narrators’ experiences I place workers’ physical and emotional experiences of labor, and the multiplicity of homes– in the affective, discursive, and material dimensions of the word – that they made. These included the houses they built for others, alongside the forms of shelter and homemaking they engaged in for themselves and their communities: from establishing temporary dwellings in harsh-conditions and attempts to be at home wherever work took them, to utilizing the skills, expertise, and income of their labor in the service of remaking their own homes and those of their communities.

I view Palestinian homemaking in the nascent Israeli state as a deeply political act, akin to what bell hooks has called “construction of [the] homeplace.” “In the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression,” such “homeplaces,” hooks argues, “however fragile and tenuous... had a radical political dimension.” hooks urges us to reevaluate African-American women’s fulfilment of the gendered roles “assigned by sexism” within the home, in light of how they expanded these roles to make the home a shelter, a place of rest, and at times the starting point for revolution. Her notion of constructing the homeplace – focused on material, affective, and intellectual care and nurturing – defines some of the Palestinian (and at times, Palestinian *and* Jewish) homemaking practices

discussed below, particularly those practiced by women. However, my emphasis is primarily on how physical acts of construction, of making homes in the material sense, intertwined with the struggle of Palestinian citizens in Israel to be once again *at home* in their homeland.³⁷⁸

Narrators and Methodology

All individuals I interviewed were involved in the Israeli construction industry between 1948-1973. They are, nonetheless, a diverse group, capturing some of the variety of Palestinian experiences shaped by the industry at the time. With the exception of one, all narrators resided in rural locales during the period, reflecting the overwhelmingly rural character of the Palestinian locales that survived the Nakba.³⁷⁹ Some narrators had lifelong careers in the construction industry, others only spent relatively short periods of time in it. Some aligned themselves with the Labor Zionist ruling elite of the period,

³⁷⁸ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2015 [1990]), Chapter 5. For a discussion of theoretical approaches to the home and its relationship to racialization, see Helen Ngo, *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017), Chapter 3.

³⁷⁹ Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*, 30-33; Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 25-27. Muhammad Abu Ahmad, whose career and educational trajectory also set him apart from most other narrators, lived in Nazareth, the only remaining Arab town within Israel after the Nakba. It is worth noting however that narrators who were teens or young adults during the final years of the British Mandate also spent long periods of time in Haifa and even Beirut and Damascus, providing a glimpse at the draw of regional urban centers for rural Palestinian youth during those years. Their return to rural towns and villages during 1948 was a direct result of the upheaval of the Nakba. Interviews with Mikhail Haddad, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018 and Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018. For more on patterns of rural migration to urban centers, primarily to Haifa, during the Mandate, see: Na'ama Ben Ze'ev, "'I came naïve from the village': on Palestinian Urbanism and Ruralism in Haifa under the British Mandate," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2018), DOI: [10.1080/13530194.2018.1491296](https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2018.1491296); Na'ama Ben Ze'ev, 'Sites of Assimilation into Urban Life: Rural Migrants' Clubs in Haifa under the Mandate, 1939–1948', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, no. 1 (2014): 114-133; Charles Anderson, "From Petition to Confrontation," 532-549; Yazbak, "From Poverty to Revolt."

others were and still are ardent communists. Others still, sought to make their own political paths or seem to have had relatively little involvement in party politics.

Narrators also differed in the access they had to education. As a rule, these differences seem to have been primarily generational. Most narrators were only able to complete primary education. Narrators who were able to obtain a high school education, did so despite prohibitive costs. These costs stemmed not only from the price of high school education itself, which did not become compulsory, nor nominally “free” in Israel until 1978, but also from the geographical dispersion of secondary education institutions for Palestinian citizens in Israel. As a result, obtaining a high school education did not mean that an individual did not work as a child, or in the construction industry as a teenager.³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ Majid al-Haj’s 1995 study of the Arab education system in Israel is, to the best of my knowledge, still the most comprehensive to date, and elucidates the limited access to education, particularly secondary education, which Palestinian citizens in Israel suffered from well into the 1970s. However, it offers little in the way of data which could demonstrate what proportion of students were able to continue onto secondary education (defined as beginning with the 9th grade) during the period of the military administration, or the years immediately following it. See: al-Haj, *Education, Empowerment, and Control*. Documents and reports included in the files of “The Committee for the Employment and Vocational Training Problems of Arab Youth,” a government committee appointed by the Ministry of Labor in mid-1961, include some useful information. It appears that as of 1960, roughly 70% of Palestinian children in Israel were able to complete the 8th grade, and their mandatory education, with some children forced to leave school already during the 5th-6th grades. A letter from the Ministry of Education claims that 44% of Arab students who completed the 8th grade in the 1958/59 school year continued onto secondary school the following year. However, the committee’s eventual report places this figure at less than 30%. See, ISA-moital-moital-0010bbt: Mahmoud Abbasi, “The State of Arab Youth in Israel,” n.d; Eliezer Shmueli to A. Meron, September 19, 1961; “Report of the Committee for the Employment and Vocational Training Problems of Arab Youth,” November 30, 1961. In her research on “Palestinian Camp Women” in Lebanon, Rosemary Sayigh identified a similar educational difference between women she interviewed who were born before 1942 and those born after, one which also reflects the role of gender in access to education. Sayigh writes that of the eighteen speakers she interviewed, “[n]one of the nine born before 1942 had gone to school, whereas all of the nine younger speakers had, with two having completed secondary school and three having reached university.” Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 2 (1998), 43.

The oral histories which my conversations with narrators produced are, like other oral histories, by definition dialogic and collaborative endeavors, shaped by a wide range of factors: The malleability of narrators' memories and subjectivities, their self-reflexivity, the languages in which the interviews took place, my positionality vis-à-vis interviewees, and the settings and participants. These factors no doubt influenced not only the content of their narratives but also the discourses and cultural contexts they drew upon and embedded their narratives in. Narrators' memories and the processes of remembering which the oral history interviews requires of them, are active processes of reconstruction. These processes are informed by communal and even national memory and ways of remembering. They are also impacted by events which occurred long after those being recalled and by the present in which the remembering took places.³⁸¹

The semi-structured interviews that inform this chapter were conducted mostly in Hebrew, in which all narrators are fluent, and which was the primary language in which

³⁸¹ For an excellent survey of the theoretical underpinnings of oral history which addresses all of these issues while drawing upon a broad array of practitioners and theorists in oral history and other disciplines, see: Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2016 [2010]). Since 1948, Palestinian history has been shaped by repeated displacements, the destruction of communities and institutions, state-oppression, and ongoing statelessness. As a result, existing Palestinian archives too have been displaced, dispersed, and destroyed. Similarly, those seeking to create alternative Palestinian archives have also faced immense difficulties. Thus, whereas in many cases oral history is useful in revealing crucial facets of history not documented in most traditional archives – which often give little room to the experiences and perceptions of non-elites – in the Palestinian case, they are even more crucial still. Accordingly, oral history has played a central role in the creation of a Palestinian historiography and historical narrative, not only through scholarly studies, but also as a tool of public history. Oral narratives have been transmitted, elaborated, and preserved across a variety of media, ranging from *qiṣṣaṣ* (Arabic for stories) shared face-to-face, through the development of the genre of written village histories, which Rochelle Davis has explored in her remarkable *Palestinian Village Histories*. Most recently, oral histories have been the focus of a variety of digital and online initiatives such as the American University in Beirut's Palestinian Oral History Archive, PalestineRemembered.com's oral history collection, and others. See: Palestinian Oral History Archive, <https://libraries.aub.edu.lb/poha/> [last accessed: 26 June 2020]; Nakba Oral History Project, <https://www.palestineremembered.com/OralHistory/Interviews-Listing/Story1151.html> [last accessed: 26 June 2020]; Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*; Sayigh, "Palestinian Camp Women," *Journal of Palestine*.

most of them worked, with parts of the conversations in Arabic. However, there were instances in which narrators were more comfortable conducting interviews entirely in Arabic. Not coincidentally, those who were more comfortable with the latter option were also those whose working lives were conducted primarily in Arabic as well.

At the beginning of each interview, I discussed my research agenda with the narrators, explaining that our conversations would inform a project that examines the history of construction work and the construction industry and their roles in shaping social hierarchies in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel. Occasionally, this also entailed my explaining what led me, as an Israeli Jew, to be interested in this history.

Understandably, some individuals were initially more suspicious of my intentions than others, cautious not to sound too critical of their experiences with the state or with Jewish employers and management. Others sought to meet what they presumed were my expectations from them. That is, as Katherine Borland has noted, narrators “adapted their narratives to account for what they think their audiences already know, what they might care about, what they might be sensitive to.”³⁸²

Most interviews were conducted as one-on-one affairs, usually in a single sitting. However, in instances in which other people were present during an interview, I have also incorporated their narratives. I did not originally set out to recreate or simulate a setting in which collective storytelling of life histories (what Rosemary Sayigh calls *quṣṣaṣ*, stories; *qīṣṣaṣ* in literary Arabic) usually takes place.³⁸³ Nonetheless, the

³⁸² Katherine Borland, “Co-Narration, Intersubjectivity, and the Listener in Family Storytelling,” *Journal of American Folklore* 130, no. 518 (2017), 444.

³⁸³ Sayigh, “Palestinian Camp Women,” 42-44.

dynamics of these collective settings which Sayigh identifies in her work - the interjections and questions of other participants, even their very presence – doubtlessly impacted the narratives people shared. Such instances of “co-narrated” back-and-forth introduced questions I would not have thought to ask and personal and familial histories which I could not have been aware of. At the same time, these multi-participant settings may have also caused people to refrain from speaking of certain things or to frame things differently than they would have in the context of a one-on-one interview. They emphasized the degree to which social contexts, settings, and interactions shape the performance of oral narratives.³⁸⁴

Occasionally, collective settings noticeably encouraged participants to share experiences they seemed otherwise hesitant to speak of and elicited the active narration of individuals aside from the intended “interviewee.” Given that I had originally set out to interview former workers, all of whom were men, the collective interview settings also granted me an invaluable opportunity to hear from workers’ families, particularly their wives. This unplanned introduction of women’s narratives, although severely limited in number, added new dimensions to my inquiry, reshaping my perspective on how both construction work and homemaking were gendered.

Out of Necessity

For many among the roughly 150,000 Palestinians who were able to remain within the new Israeli state after the 1948 war and the Nakba, or to successfully return to it in the

³⁸⁴ Borland, “Co-Narration, Intersubjectivity, and the Listener in Family Storytelling.”

subsequent months and years, scarcity and want were defining features. As Adel Manna has recently reminded us, having survived the Nakba and being able to remain more or less “in place,” did not mean that survival was not still the primary concern of those who remained.³⁸⁵ The growing body of scholarship on Palestinian citizens in Israel in the state’s first decades - the time of the Israeli military administration between 1948-1966, and the years immediately following - has shown that during this period, survival meant many things: from struggles for the right to remain, through those over political and civil rights and over resources, to those over cultural and political connections to the Arab world.³⁸⁶ It has also shown, however, that survival often retained its barest meaning: staying alive, not going hungry, keeping a roof over your family’s head. Governmental land expropriation, discriminatory resource allocation, and restrictions on movement and thus access to markets, meant that the agricultural economy many families and communities relied upon was no longer able to sustain them. Employment became a necessity, but was hard to come by locally, and in order to work elsewhere – namely, in Jewish localities – individuals had to navigate the military administration’s work permit regime.

In light of these difficulties, the imperative of survival drove individuals to seek work wherever available. “Now, I, as a child, there was no high school. We finished

³⁸⁵ Adel Manna, *Nakba and Survival*. An Arabic version of Manna’s book was published in 2016 by the Institute of Palestine Studies, under the title *Nakba wa-Baqa’: Hikayat Filastiniyin Zalamu fi Haifa wa-l-Jalil*.

³⁸⁶ For recent examples dealing with this period, see: Nassar, *Brothers Apart*; Dallasheh, “Troubled Waters”; Manna, *Nakba and Survival*; Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*. An older body of scholarship deals primarily with the economic realities of Palestinians in Israel, including during the first decades of the state: Khalidi, *The Palestinian Economy in Israel*; Noah Lewin-Epstein and Moshe Semyonov, *The Arab Minority in Israel’s Economy: Patterns of Ethnic Inequality* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); Haidar, *On the Margins*.

primary school. There was a military administration, we can't leave [the village], and there was hunger... So, we went to work," Ahmad Masarweh, of 'Ar'ara in the Triangle, recalls.³⁸⁷ Munir Qa'war (b. 1940), of nearby Kafr Qar', the eldest of four siblings when his father passed away in 1951, remembers that, "Israel was just established, there were problems everywhere, and people were hungry. People don't have [food] to eat." Munir's father had saved enough money to sustain the family after his passing until Munir had finished the 8th grade, "and after that, there is no more money. I have to go to work."³⁸⁸

Among the narrators who were or came of school age after Israel's establishment, Munir was hardly alone in having completed only his primary schooling. As mentioned above, the inaccessibility of a high school education, geographically as well as financially, compounded poverty in motivating children to search for work. Of the individuals whose narratives form the basis of this chapter, only Muhammad Abu Ahmad (b. 1943) of Nazareth, Anis Khoury (b. 1952) of Tarshiha, and Sadeq Dallasheh (b. 1954) of Bu'eine, graduated high school. Both however, recall working in construction during high school as well. Sadeq stated that he would have never been able to finance his high school studies, for which he had to leave Bu'eine and rent an apartment in 'Ilabun, had he not saved money working in construction during the summer breaks.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, 'Ar'ara, October 10, 2018.

³⁸⁸ Interview with Munir Qa'war, Kafr Qar', October 13, 2018.

³⁸⁹ See, fn. 380 above. Interviews with Sadeq Dallasheh, Bu'eine, October 19, 2018 and Muhammad Abu Ahmad, Nazareth, October 20, 2018.

During the first two decades of Israeli statehood, work in agriculture was the most readily available.³⁹⁰ Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh first found work in Zikhron Ya‘akov, a Jewish settlement roughly twenty kilometers west of ‘Ar‘ara, at the age of thirteen. Munir Qa‘war first found work in agriculture in Giv‘at ‘Ada, several kilometers from his hometown of Kafr Qar‘, at a similar age. This remained true for younger narrators. Sadeq Dallasheh recalls, “the first daily wage I made in my life, I was eight or nine years old.” When the family’s finances were particularly tight, he would work alongside his mother in the fields below Bu‘eine.³⁹¹

While not as widespread as agricultural labor, the construction industry, which faced a shortage of skilled professionals and the housing needs of massive immigration waves, was among the first branches to absorb Palestinian workers. As early as October 1949, a British diplomatic report noted that despite the dominant preference for Jewish employees – that is, the continuation of the pre-state policy of Hebrew labor, now undergirded by a state apparatus – “certain Arab elements, such as skilled carpenters and others, whose services are necessary to the authorities, readily find employment in the construction of the new Jewish settlements.”³⁹²

Solel Boneh, the Histadrut’s contracting arm first established in the early 1920s, and one of the most powerful corporations in the state, was an early recruiter in the

³⁹⁰ Statistics regarding the percentage of Palestinian citizens in Israel employed in agriculture between 1948-1973 vary. What is clear, however, is that if during the first decade of the state the percentage of Palestinians employed in agriculture was around or above 50%, in the second decade it decreased to around 40%, and by the early 1970s, to just over 20%. See: Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, *The Arab Minority*, 47-51; Khalidi, *The Arab Economy*, 113-125; Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, 304-305.

³⁹¹ Interviews with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018 and Sadeq Dallasheh, October 19, 2018.

³⁹² TNA: FO 371/75268, 6-7, 9-10. For the Israeli authorities’ and the Histadrut’s pursuit of a policy of Hebrew labor after 1948, see fn. 317 above.

country's north. Mikhail Haddad (b. 1926) of Tarshiha, who was working in construction in Damascus when the war erupted, found work with Solel Boneh in Tarshiha itself just after Jewish forces occupied the village in 1948. He was employed in repairing homes whose Palestinian owners had fled or been driven out, so that they could house new Jewish immigrants.³⁹³ Shawqi Khoury (b. 1931) of Fassuta, had no prior experience in construction when he began working for Solel Boneh, building the new cooperative agricultural settlement (*moshav*) Hosen to Tarshiha's southeast, in 1949. He remembers however that those with prior experience and skill were the first to be recruited. His recollections align both with Mikhail Haddad's narrative and the 1949 British diplomatic reported cited above, as he notes that "in Tarshiha especially there were excellent craftsmen.... [T]here were carpenters, ironworkers.... They would be accepted straight away as expert craftsmen."³⁹⁴

Ibrahim Shamshoum (b. 1933), of 'Arrabe, was following in his father's footsteps when he first set out to Haifa in 1950 or 1951 hoping to find work in a concrete block factory at the age of seventeen or eighteen. Ibrahim's family had fled their hometown of Nazareth to 'Arrabe after the fall of Haifa in April 1948. He recalls that for roughly two years "there was no work" in 'Arrabe, prompting him to leave for Haifa. When I first asked Ibrahim, later a contractor and a leading figure in the 'Arrabe branch of the communist party, how he had started working in construction, he replied, "my father was

³⁹³ Interview with Mikhail Haddad, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018. Mikhail's story, poignant as it may be, was not unique. Palestinians elsewhere were also employed in renovating and even demolishing the homes of their neighbors-turned-refugees, to make way for new Jewish immigrants. Andrew Ross presents the narrative of Jiryis Sakas of Kafr Yassif, whose father, an experienced builder and quarry owner, worked in demolition and construction for Solel Boneh in his hometown of al-Birwa, only a few years after he and his family were driven from it. Ross, *Stone Men*, 41-45.

³⁹⁴ Interview with Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

a builder” (*abui kan mu ‘alim ‘amar*).³⁹⁵ Whenever he explained how he learned a certain skill, Ibrahim always referred back to this familial heritage.³⁹⁶

Most narrators, however, had neither family legacies nor prior experience in construction work. By the time they came to work in construction, they usually had already worked in agriculture or other physical labor.³⁹⁷ What drew most of them to construction work was that when there was demand for workers, wages were considerably higher than those in any other occupations available to them. All narrators agreed that wages in construction were higher than those offered in agriculture.³⁹⁸ When I asked Ibrahim Zahalqa (b. 1944) of Kafr Qar‘, if he recalls whether many others in the village also worked in construction when he began working in 1964, he said,

Yes. Many... There was no work, only this... Working at that time, say, in ’64 or ’65, if we had to work in agriculture it would be four [Israeli] Pounds a day... And in construction it was double, double and then some, more than ten Pounds [a day].³⁹⁹

Ibrahim’s insistence that work in the construction industry for many of his peers was also a product of limited choices - “there was no work, only this” - was echoed by other narrators, including those who, like Ibrahim, built entire careers in the industry.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, ‘Arrabe, October 12, 2018.

³⁹⁶ Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, ‘Arrabe, October 12, 2018.

³⁹⁷ Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, for example, mentions working in gardening for a period. Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018.

³⁹⁸ Muhammad Abu Ahmad, who was the Secretary of the Construction Workers Association in the Nazareth area from 1963-1980, mentioned agriculture’s seasonality as another reason why construction was a preferred trade. However, as Bernstein and Swirski, and indeed some of the narrators I interviewed mentioned, the structure of employment in construction was hardly stable and could easily be considered “seasonal” as well, if for different reasons. Interview with Muhammad Abu Ahmad, Nazareth, October 20, 2018; Bernstein and Swirski, “The Rapid Economic Development of Israel,” 72-3.

³⁹⁹ Interview with Ibrahim Zahalqa, Kafr Qar‘, October 7, 2018.

⁴⁰⁰ Interviews with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018 and Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

Muhammad Abu Ahmad, who was the Secretary of the Construction Workers Association in the Nazareth area from 1963-1980, linked this notion of construction as work for those “who have no other choice,” to early safety problems in the industry and the widespread denigration of so called “Arab labor” (*‘avoda ‘aravit*) in Jewish Israeli culture,

...People simply weren’t experts. Like I said, this idea of “Arab labor” didn’t come from nothing. A significant number of these Arab workers who came to construction, came because they had no other choice. You work in construction.⁴⁰¹

This sense of having no other choice should not be confused with self-denigration or denigration of their craft among the narrators themselves. Fissures appeared and experiences of hurt, discrimination, and frustration surfaced even in the narratives of individuals who at first sought to portray an idyllic picture of professional relations between Palestinians and Jews. Yet, narrators never expressed shame in doing work “no one else would.” On the contrary even, as Muhammad himself put it,

There’s a common saying: We the Arabs built this country. What are you [the Jews] saying? Who built this country? Who built Haifa? The kibbutzim? The hotels? We the Arabs built this country.... What, doesn’t the country belong to us? Don’t we belong to the country?⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ Interview with Muhammad Abu Ahmad, Nazareth, October 20, 2018.

⁴⁰² Interview with Muhammad Abu Ahmad, Nazareth, October 20, 2018. In his 1974 novel, *The Strange Events of the Disappearance of Sa’id abi al-Nahs al-Mutasha’il* (published in English under the title, *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist*), widely considered one of the most important works of Palestinian literature in the twentieth century, Emile Habiby expresses a similar sentiment, cited also in the epigraph to the Introduction above: “... who erected the buildings, paved the roads, dug and planted the earth of Israel, other than the Arabs who remained there?” Emile Habiby, *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist*, trans. Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor LeGassick (Brooklyn, N. Y: Interlink Pub Group, 2001), 81.

I mentioned this formulation again later when asking Muhammad about its relationship to the many difficulties workers experienced under the military administration. His reply made explicit the claim's link to Zionist discourses of republican citizenship as a basis of rights, even as these had moved away from "building the land" to military service: "It was prominent. We would even say it just like that, openly. We argued, 'What, what do you have more than me? What, you went to the army? I built the country!'"⁴⁰³

Sadeq Dallasheh drew a related parallel, albeit without mentioning military service directly. Instead, he described construction work among Palestinian citizens in Israel as akin to the institution of "national service" (*sherut leumi*). "National service," is a state-supervised system of voluntary work in pre-approved civil society organizations. It is offered to some citizens as an alternative to Israel's mandatory military conscription. Such "service" is viewed both as a means for citizens who wish to contribute to the (national) community but cannot serve in the military to do so, and as a way for those individuals to enjoy at least some of the rights and social and material rewards military service grants.⁴⁰⁴ Unlike Muhammad Abu Ahmad, who sought to cast construction work

⁴⁰³ Interview with Muhammad Abu Ahmad, Nazareth, October 20, 2018. For a discussion of the ethno-nationalist republican citizenship model in the Zionist settlement enterprise (the *Yishuv*) and in Israel, as it operated in parallel to other models from the Ottoman period onwards, see: Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For an overview of the historical cycles of "militarization" and the social and political "convertibility" of military service in the *Yishuv* and Israeli society, see: Yagil Levy, "Social Convertibility and Militarism: Evaluations of the Development of Military-Society Relations in Israel in the Early 2000s," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2003), 73-80.

⁴⁰⁴ The national service system was originally introduced in 1971 to allow religious Jewish women to perform an alternative form of service other than Israel's mandatory military conscription. According to the letter of the law, Palestinian citizens in Israel are all legally required to serve in the military. However, the state has refrained from conscripting the vast majority of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship (aside from Druze men), and only a small number have typically volunteered for service. At least since the late 1980s

as a form of republican participation by comparing it to military service, Sadeq's comparison was aimed towards both construction work's ubiquity among Palestinian men in Israel, and the material benefits it provides:

One thing remains [constant], it [i.e., construction] is a national service. [It is a form of national service] for an Arab.... How do I get to this [conclusion]? It's [like] a national service. I want to go and study at the university? I need some money to pay tuition. Now, where do I work? The simplest thing, whenever I want, I can find work in construction, it's always like that.⁴⁰⁵

Sadeq's mention of university tuition is hardly coincidental. Higher-education tuition support is a key material benefit given to those who serve in the military or in the national service system. Construction, in Sadeq's telling, is comparable to national service for Palestinians, not because of its contribution to a nation and nationalism which are not their own and have historically developed at their expense. Most Palestinian political parties and civil society organizations in Israel have consistently opposed the participation of Palestinian youth in national service programs, which they view as means for their cooptation and the neutralization of their civil, economic, and national demands. Rather, for Sadeq, construction for Palestinians serves a similar function as national service does for some Jewish Israelis, in that it provides income which can be used to

various political parties and civil rights organizations have advocated that Palestinian citizens either be required or permitted to volunteer to national service as well. Both right-wing and liberal parties and organizations have promoted such proposals, which became, as Rhoda Kanaaneh states, "a recurring theme." These parties have typically argued, according to their political orientation, that certain rights should be conditional upon such service, or that Palestinian citizens should not be blocked from the rights and material advantages it provides. See: Suhad Daher-Nashif, "Trapped Escape: Young Palestinian Women and the Israeli National-Civic Service," *Arab Studies Journal* Vol. 25, No. 2 (Fall 2017): 34-58. Rhoda Kanaaneh, *Surrounded: Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), esp. chapter 1-4; Moshe Sherer, "National Service in Israel: Motivations, Volunteer Characteristics, and Levels of Content," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (March 2004): 94-95.

⁴⁰⁵ Interview with Sadeq Dallasheh, Bu'eine, October 19, 2018.

fund higher education. Greater access to higher education through tuition support has been a central point for those advocating that Palestinians join national service programs en masse. Construction work, Sadeq effectively argues, already functions similarly for some.⁴⁰⁶

Sadeq himself gained most of his experience in construction between 1970-1973, when he worked in the southern port of Eilat and in the Dead Sea to save up for university and later during university breaks. Before this he had paid his way through high school by working in construction during the summers. Throughout our conversation, Sadeq repeatedly mentioned the influence his parents' emphasis on education had on his siblings and him. Their mother would meticulously check her children's homework daily, only to reveal to them later in life that she was in fact illiterate. But the link between construction work and funding education as a device for social mobility appears to have been broader and at least to some extent generational.⁴⁰⁷

Anis Khoury (b. 1952) of Tarshiha, a career educator and former school principal,

⁴⁰⁶ Kanaaneh, *Surrounded*, 32-34; Janaan Bsoul, "'Ha-Sherut ha-Leumi Hu Kli le-'Iluf 'Aravim Tze'irim'" ["The National Service is a Tool for Taming Young Arabs"] *TheMarker*, November 26, 2015 <https://www.themarker.com/career/1.2784783> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]. Another possible interpretation of the notion of construction work as "national service," which may have also underpinned Sadeq's invocation of the idea, is bleaker still. Raja Khalidi describes the high mobility demanded of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship who wished to participate in the workforce as a "national service" as well. While never stated explicitly, Khalidi's use of the term in a section which describes Palestinian workers' migration as "a path to survival" and a matter of little choice, indicates that this "service" could also be understood as coerced. In a recent interview in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, the Palestinian poet and playwright, Ayman Kamel Agbaria, drew a similar parallel to Sadeq's. Explaining that after high school and before going to university he worked in construction, Agbaria jokingly noted, "construction work is like a year of public service for us." Vered Lee, "The Palestinian Poet Who Refuses to Be the Court Jester of Israeli Literature," *Ha'aretz*, February 6, 2020 <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-the-palestinian-poet-who-refuses-to-be-the-court-jester-of-israeli-literature-1.8499307> [last accessed: April 1, 2020]. I thank Orit Bashkin for calling the interview with Agbaria to my attention.

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with Sadeq Dallasheh, Bu'eine, October 19, 2018.

worked at Solel Boneh for several years to fund his academic studies.⁴⁰⁸ And although Munir Qa‘war himself left school for work at thirteen, he recalls that funding school and academic studies for his youngest brother – whose birth in 1953 was part of what drove Munir to seek a job in the first place – was an important motivation for him. Multiple narrators mentioned the ability to fund higher education for their children as the consideration behind their continued work in the construction industry. Motivations to seek work in construction then, could morph from the strict purpose of ad hoc survival to more elaborate considerations of possible futures and social advancement, within an individual’s lifetime.⁴⁰⁹

The experiences of Palestinian citizens who worked in construction during the first two and a half decades of the state, shaped their attempts at homemaking (and remaking) in various ways. The dire financial need which drove workers constituted an obvious material connection between the two realms. Meanwhile, rhetoric emphasizing the crucial role Palestinians played in Israel’s construction industry to reinforce their claims of belonging to the land, and its belonging to them, constituted an ideological and affective connection. Through a repurposing of the state’s and Zionism’s idioms, these rhetorical uses challenged both Palestinians marginalization under the new state and the broader doubts Zionist ideology cast on their connection to the land. The following sections highlight how the role of Palestinian citizens working in the Israeli construction industry shaped other processes of homemaking which workers, their families, and their

⁴⁰⁸ Conversation with Anis and Layla Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Munir Qa‘war, Kafr Qar‘, October 13, 2018.

communities engaged in - the making of homes away from home and the use of expertise gained in construction work to build and refashion Palestinian homes.

In Search of Home, In Search of Shelter

Throughout the economic ebbs and flows of Israel's first decades, in construction as elsewhere, the unequal distribution of government resources and economic activity drew a relatively clear occupational map: very little work was available in the centers of Palestinian life within Israel.⁴¹⁰ Employment required workers to travel, often far away. This was particularly true in construction, where in 1961, 81% of Palestinian employees commuted to work.⁴¹¹ The poor infrastructure and barely existing public transportation in many Arab locales meant that the problem of Palestinian "commuters" (*mutanaqilun*), was often a major preoccupation in the pages of the Communist Party's *al-Ittihad*, the period's major Arabic-language newspaper.⁴¹²

Among the difficulties that lacking infrastructure, transportation and movement restrictions imposed upon Palestinian workers was the need to find a place to stay near places of employment, which were either too far or too dangerous to travel to and from

⁴¹⁰ See Haidar, *On the Margins*, Chapter 5.

⁴¹¹ Haidar, *On the Margins*, 94.

⁴¹² See, for example: *al-Ittihad*, January 17, 1963, 2; *al-Ittihad*, March 27, 1964, 5; *al-Ittihad*, May 22, 1964, 6. See also: Haidar, *On the Margins*, 110-112; Khalidi, *The Arab Economy*, 141-145. Both Khalidi and Haidar discuss these patterns as "mobilities" rather than migration, indicating perhaps how such patterns anticipated the "circular mobilities" which Naama Blatman-Thomas describes among middle-class Palestinian citizens in Israel who have moved to the Jewish-Israeli city of Karmiel. Naama Blatman-Thomas, "Commuting for Rights: Circular Mobilities and Regional Identities of Palestinians in a Jewish-Israeli Town," *Geoforum* 78 (January 2017): 22-32.

on a daily basis. To do so, workers made and inhabited multiple kinds of shelters.⁴¹³

These ranged from housing for livestock, through the construction sites of homes-in-the-making of which they were the first inhabitants, to grave-like pits in the open field, shared apartments and leased rooms in family homes. This section explores these various forms of shelter as recounted by interviewees, and the range of physical and emotional experiences they engendered: dehumanization alongside politicization, the tolls and wages of passing alongside the threat of exposure, fragile intimacies alongside the alienation of being cast as a racialized threat, isolation alongside solidarity. The section further explores questions of visibility and invisibility, both as conditions forced upon Palestinian workers and as strategies workers employed.⁴¹⁴

When Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh describes the sleeping arrangements in Zikhron Ya'akov, where he began working in 1952 at the age of 13, he refers to "reserving a room in a hotel before you go." He clarifies, "that is, you check in which cowshed your friend is sleeping." Then the tone of his description shifts rapidly,

⁴¹³ The question of housing for migrant laborer populations, including internal migrant labor, and the various effects of the housing question on social, cultural, political and gender issues, is one that arose in multiple colonial and post-colonial contexts. The degree to which colonial or state governments intervened in offering solutions to the problem has varied widely. See, for example: Jane Bristol-Rhys, "Socio-Spatial Boundaries in Abu Dhabi," in *Migrant Labour in the Persian Gulf*, edited by Mehran Kamrava and Zahra Babar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 59-84; Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009); Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), especially chapter 3. The widespread neglect of migrant laborer populations is also partially responsible for the emergence of what Mike Davis has called the "Planet of Slums." Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁴¹⁴ This specific kind of homemaking was shared also with other commuting workers, many of them young teenagers. For example, a report on youth between ages 12-17 in Nazareth, authored as part of the work of the government's Committee for the Employment and Vocational Training Problems of Arab Youth in late 1961, and dealing primarily with young teenagers employed in coffee shops, restaurants and retail locations, mentions instances of up to 15 teenagers sharing a room in Haifa during the winter months, when sleeping outside became no longer possible. "Overview of the State of Youth in Nazareth," N.D., ISA-moital-moital-0010bbt.

I was fourteen, thirteen, fifteen, it was the first time I had the honor of getting to know headlice. You get a job, you dwell in the cowshed, you wake up at five in the morning, water the garden, collect the eggs from the coop, hitch the mule to the wagon, and that's just the yard work. Until you actually start moving to the fields, it doesn't count [as work], what counts is when you first lift the hoe (*turiye*) until you put it down...

After that, that's when I started understanding what the French Revolution was about, and the exploitation, through having experienced it on your [own] body. You can't understand if you haven't been through that experience. It remains [only as] things that are said. But going through it, at [that] age... [When you're] working and you doubt you'll be paid. And what's more you're enslaved (*meshu'abad*), you're a tool. You have to [work] from five till six-seven at night. And then you go to Tel Aviv, and there it's only construction, or gardening.⁴¹⁵

Ahmad, a lifelong political radical, narrates his politicization at a young age as rooted in the felt experiences of exploitative labor: from the difficulty of work itself – measured by employers strictly according to the particular physical activity of using the hoe; through the impact the sanitary conditions of the cowshed “hotel” had on his body (“it was the first time I had the honor of getting to know headlice”); to the insecurity of whether you will be paid for your labor. These physical hardships reduced Ahmad in his own eyes to a “tool”, enslaved, and not in control of his own body. Revolutionary politics, he seems to argue, can only be truly understood through experiences like these. Otherwise “it remains [only] things that are said.”

After leaving Zikhron Ya'akov – an episode he narrates as an escape – Ahmad lived in Yakum, a kibbutz on the Mediterranean coast, for a brief but formative period. He arrived in Yakum at the invitation of the short-lived “Pioneer Arab Youth” movement (*No'ar 'Aravi Halutzi*), an initiative for Palestinian youth established by the *Shomer Tza'ir* (“Young Guard”), a socialist Zionist movement, at the time still committed, at

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, 'Ar'ara, October 10, 2018.

least outwardly, to a bi-national vision for the fledgling state. At Yakum, Ahmad and three other teens who arrived with him were given Hebrew names. Ahmad became “Tzvi.” He and fourteen other Palestinian teens lived on the Kibbutz, studying, working, and eating with their Jewish peers. Yet, Ahmad noticed that while Jewish teens studied for five hours a day and worked for three, Palestinian teens studied for three and worked for five. While supposedly a result of the groups’ different funding sources, the message the arrangement relayed was clear to him: Palestinians were considered better served, and better utilized, dedicating their time to physical labor rather than to learning.⁴¹⁶

Although he left Yakum disillusioned with the movement, Ahmad’s experiences there were crucial to his ability to navigate the next episode of his life in Tel Aviv. When he first arrived in the city to look for work, he continued presenting himself as “Tzvi,” passing as Jewish. His ability to do so successfully no doubt depended on the cultural and linguistic skills and the manners of behavior and comportment he acquired at Yakum.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018. For a journalistic article on the “Pioneer Arab Youth” which features interviews with Ahmad and others who participated in the movement, see: Ayelet Bechar, “When Arabs Were Invited to Live the Zionist Dream,” *Ha’aretz*, July 26, 2019 <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium.MAGAZINE-the-experiment-that-invited-israeli-arabs-to-live-the-zionist-dream-1.7575293> [last accessed: July 1, 2020].

⁴¹⁷ While Ahmad does not mention it, both his appearance and his knowledge of Arabic would have made passing as a young Mizrahi Jew, perhaps a relatively recent immigrant, entirely plausible. The possibility of passing as Mizrahi Jews is alluded to in “I am Ahmad” as well, as described below. The practice of adopting a Hebrew sounding name in order to pass as Jewish, particularly in the workplace, is still extant among Palestinians working in Jewish locales in Israel/Palestine. See for example: Andreas Hackl, “Immersive Invisibility in the Settler-Colonial City: The Conditional Inclusion of Palestinians in Tel Aviv,” *American Ethnologist* 45, no. 3 (August 2018), 346. For other works which explore questions of passing in Israel/Palestine, see: Judit Druks, “Passing As... in Arab Labor by Sayed Kashua on Israeli TV,” *Third Text* (March 18, 2020), DOI: 10.1080/09528822.2020.1735762; Liora Sion, “Passing as Hybrid: Arab-Palestinian Teachers in Jewish Schools,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 14 (December, 2014): 2636–2652; Orna Sasson-Levy and Avi Shoshana, “‘Passing’ as (Non)Ethnic: The Israeli Version of Acting White,” *Sociological Inquiry* 83, no. 3 (2013): 448–472; Gil Hochberg, “To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab: Sayed Kashua and the Prospect of Minority Speech-Acts,” *Comparative Literature* 62, no. 1 (2010): 68–88; Carol Bardenstein, “Cross/Cast: Passing in Israeli and Palestinian Cinema,” in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, eds. Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 99–125.

As “Tzvi,” Ahmad soon exchanged the cowshed “hotels” and the Kibbutz dormitories for a more hospitable arrangement in Ramat Gan, a city just outside Tel Aviv. His early experiences there were also a reminder, however, that he, like many Palestinians who were looking for work in Jewish towns at the time, was still very much a child. As he describes them, he becomes visibly emotional:

I started going from place to place, I arrived at a house, [there] an older woman, she takes me on for work. I worked in the yard. She made me food, washed my clothes. There was a pot over a fire [in which she washed the clothes]. She looked for work for me, gave me tools.... [Later] I went and wrote a letter to her, [telling her] who I am.⁴¹⁸

That living arrangement, and the ongoing ties with the family he stayed with were at times more fragile, at least from Ahmad’s perspective, than he initially makes apparent. The woman’s daughter (who later also became a lifelong friend), was at the time a captain in the Israeli army: “When I was working in the garden, the daughter came, a captain, that’s real military. I was shaking, I couldn’t respond, you have to think of a situation of terror. I had no idea [what to do], I was ‘Tzvi’ then.” Ahmad’s fear of having his true identity exposed by an army officer was well-founded. Even though he was a minor, as a Palestinian from ‘Ar‘ara, without a permit, his presence and employment in Ramat Gan were deemed unlawful under military rule. Being caught would have risked his ability to financially support his family. It could also lead to costly

⁴¹⁸ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018.

finest and even the imprisonment of an adult family member who might be demanded to serve a sentence on Ahmad's behalf.⁴¹⁹

After the 1967 war, the woman who took him into her home, Ms. Levin, sought out Ahmad (who had previously revealed his identity to her) to discuss her disillusion with Zionism in the war's wake. They remained in contact until Ms. Levin passed. When Ahmad describes their final conversations, the impact of her attitude towards him when he was a young teenager is evident,

... I was in touch with this woman until the end of her days, she has a daughter in Ma'agan Mikhael [a kibbutz on the Mediterranean coast]. [I] came there [to meet her], and she told me, "Ahmad, what do you want? I'm done [i.e., I am about to die]." I tell her, "That's your business, but my business is that I can't forget. You making me a sandwich, washing my clothes, and looking for a job for me. That was a home (*ze haya bayt*). It was a refuge from the jungle."

Nimrod: It was an alternative to sleeping in the fields.

Ahmad: No! No! The attitude (*yahas*) [i.e., the way she treated and related to Ahmad] first of all. An attitude that just wasn't there.⁴²⁰

Ahmad was emphatic in correcting my misunderstanding. I had suggested his gratitude towards Ms. Levin was perhaps largely a product of the typically harsh alternatives he had for staying at her home. The kinds of temporary dwellings he found in a Zikhron Ya'akov cowshed, or later in the fields outside of Tel Aviv. What made Ms. Levin's house a home for Ahmad, however, was first and foremost the kindness and care she had shown him. "The jungle" from which Ahmad sought refuge was defined not only by its often-inhumane physical conditions, but also by the terror and the invisibility it

⁴¹⁹ Shira Robinson discusses multiple instances of sanctions and punishment meted upon Palestinians citizens who authorities considered in violation of the work and employment restrictions under the military administration, including sanctions imposed on working children and their relatives. See Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*, 42-45.

⁴²⁰ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, 'Ar'ara, October 10, 2018.

forced upon Palestinian workers. Since he had come to that “jungle,” Ms. Levin was the first person to see Ahmad as a full human being, deserving of her kindness, affection, and care. When he revealed his identity to her, Ms. Levin told him she had already realized he was Palestinian long before. Unlike at Yakum, where the identity of “Tzvi” was forced upon him, he could be Ahmad with her.⁴²¹

Other experiences of such living arrangements demonstrate the various shades of fragile intimacies they fostered. At thirteen, Munir Qa‘war left agricultural work in Giv‘at ‘Ada in 1953 and set out to find work in the Tel Aviv area. In Jaffa, he found work and a home of sorts:

I went and found work there in Jaffa with some Bulgarian man. He had thirty-four sheep and he wanted someone to take them out to pasture.... He had a woman, and they told me, you’ll get fifty Pounds a month and we’ll give you food. And the woman would, the Bulgarians would make these red peppers filled with *burghul*.... And we weren’t familiar with this, but I grew used to it since [laughs]. And this woman, I mean, she loved me, loved me so much. Even as a child, I mean... her love entered my heart. ...I worked there, maybe for three weeks or a month [each time], before coming home. And my mom, my mom is here [in Kafr Qar‘] and she’s crying and saying, “how do you manage son?” And I tell her, “Listen, this is what I want, to work. And that’s that.”⁴²²

Assuming an adult role by refuting his mother’s concerns while recalling the care of the Jewish woman he worked for, hints at the role the latter was fulfilling for Munir when he was away from home. But there were also components in the relationship which seem to have made Munir somewhat uneasy, as he moved between the roles of child and adult:

⁴²¹ In this sense, Ms. Levin had provided Ahmad with a “homeplace” as hooks defines it – a humanizing place of nurture, care and rest. See fn. 378, above.

⁴²² Interview with Munir Qa‘war, Kafr Qar‘, October 13, 2018.

Munir: So, you see, back then there weren't showers like there are now. And there was a warehouse by the [house], and when once a month I wanted to go back home, she would boil water, the woman, and bring it to me, and she would say, "Listen, I want to help you [bathe]." And I tell her, "No, I'm a big boy already, I can do it myself, even my mother doesn't help me." And I, I'm sorry, I mean, there are people who think, I mean, that this was maybe related to sex.... I didn't know what sex was. But I knew, when I grew up, that the woman's intention was good. Her intention wasn't, god forbid, that she would, with a child, ummm, something. She wanted to help me because she loved me, I mean, as a child. She loved me as a child. Because her whole behavior wasn't a behavior of, of...
 Nimrod: It was motherly behavior?
 Munir: Yes, [the behavior] of a mother. Of mother and child. That's what I tell them.⁴²³

Munir speaks of this episode in his relationship with this significantly older Jewish woman who was both his employer and functioned as a surrogate mother to him, as though the suggestion that there may have been a sexual component to it sullies a connection he remembers as "pure." The episode itself, meanwhile, demonstrates yet another layer of the emotional and physical vulnerability young Palestinians experienced in their attempts to provide for their families. It also shows how fraught questions of masculinity and sexuality could become for young Palestinian men working away from home.

Munir's vulnerability contrasts with common Jewish Israeli perceptions of the masculinity and sexuality of Palestinian workers engaged in physical labor in Jewish localities, as essentially threatening.⁴²⁴ Shawqi Khoury recalls working as a plasterer in Beit Oren, a kibbutz not far from Haifa,

⁴²³ Interview with Munir Qa'war, Kafr Qar', October 13, 2018.

⁴²⁴ A considerable body of scholarship has investigated perceptions of the racialized "other" and the "native" as a sexual threat in colonial and settler colonial contexts, from the attitude towards enslaved Blacks in the American South, through the "Black Peril" in South Africa, Kenya, and Rhodesia, to the

Shawqi: I don't remember exactly how we got to Beit Oren, me and a relative. We worked as plasterers. We had a reputation as excellent plasterers. We went there, we started working in the kibbutz, and they gave us food, a place to sleep, showers, everything was fine. We worked there for some time, and they were very happy. One day they show up and say, "the work is done, go home." We went home, but there was work [i.e., the work wasn't done]. And I didn't know [the] reason [they told us to go].... Thirty years later I meet the construction coordinator of Beit Oren at the Party [Mapai]. He was a Party member. He recognized me right away, I didn't so much. [He said] "Hello! Do you remember me? I'm Sha'ul who was the construction coordinator at Kibbutz Beit Oren. Do you know why we drove you out (*girashnu*) from Beit Oren?"

Nimrod: He said, "drove you out?!"

Shawqi: Yes. I said, "I don't know, I was still only speaking Hebrew half-and-half [at the time]." He [Sha'ul] smiles and laughs.... I'm not saying this to [brag], just to say what happened [Shawqi pauses to clarify].... He [Sha'ul] told me, "Listen you were such a handsome guy, all the women in the kibbutz would look."

[Shawqi laughs] Really! After thirty years! I came to eat bread! I came to look for girls?!⁴²⁵

For Shawqi, this anecdote is an opportunity to boast a little about his good looks as a young man (at 88, he still exudes plenty of charisma and charm). What underlay it however was at once a fear of the possibility of Palestinians and Jewish Israelis forming romantic relationships, and a perception of the Palestinian worker as a sexual threat and potential predator, one that needed to be "driven out." It also placed Shawqi's concerns in stark contrast with those of his employers – he was there "to eat bread" not "to look for girls."

White Women's Protection Ordinance in New Guinea. See for example: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*, revised edition (Columbia University Press, 1993); Jock MacCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902-1935* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, second edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010 [2002]), Chapter 3; Anna Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality*, second edition (Routledge, 2019), Chapter 9.

⁴²⁵ Interview with Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

This cultural fear of the sexualized Palestinian man in the Jewish city is also referenced in “I Am Ahmad,” the pathbreaking short docudrama which Ahmad Masarweh and several partners made based on Ahmad’s experiences in Tel Aviv’s construction industry. As Ahmad’s character is walking on a Tel Aviv street behind a young Jewish couple, a man and a woman – in a scene which, as Yosefa Loshitzky points out itself places Ahmad as a looming threat, despite the film’s generally empathetic and sympathetic approach to its protagonist – we hear his internal monologue (in the voice of Ahmad Sabr Masarweh):

At night in a strange city, you are alone. You know that no one [there] cares about you. That they absolutely don’t want you here. That they think you are dispensable, and that it would be best if you go somewhere [else]: to Canada, or to America. Just as long as you’re not here – in their streets; in their homes; in front of their women.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁶ “Ani Ahmad/Ana Ahmad (I am Ahmad),” directed by Avshalom Katz, written by Ram Loevy, Avshalom Katz and Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, produced by David Ernfeld and Ram Loevy (David Ernfeld, 1966), film. The concern with such “predatory” patterns among Palestinian men in Jewish spaces, strongly reminiscent of colonial fears, dates to the Mandate and has ample representations in Israeli film and literature. Examples from the Hebrew press include discussions about one, ‘Abd el-Majid, a Jaffan Palestinian who was briefly a suspect during the inquiry into Hayyim Arlosoroff’s murder in 1933 after he was bribed to falsely confess his guilt. Right-wing Hebrew newspapers reported on ‘Abd el-Majid’s supposed habit of “looking for and chasing Jewish girls in Tel Aviv.” See: *Hazit ha-‘Am*, March 2, 1934, 1; *Do‘ar ha-Yom*, March 4, 1934.

Beginning in the late 1950s violence between Jews and Arabs within Israel was often portrayed as revolving around the rumored pursuit of Jewish women by Arab men. *Ha-‘Olam ha-Ze*, cultivating its generally sensationalist line, marked such violence in the town of Rishon Le-Tzion in 1962 as “only the beginning” of a wider phenomenon awaiting to erupt. Arab workers working in Jewish cities, the newspaper claimed, were the unwitting “explosives” that would eventually set many more cities alight. Here again, the seamline between Mizrahi Jewish women and Palestinian Arab men was deemed particularly problematic, compounded by the problem of Arabs “passing” as Jews. See: *Ha-‘Olam ha-Ze*, “Rishon Le-Tzion ve-Hal’a,” October 24, 1962, 6-7, 10. For other examples, see: *Ma‘ariv*, October 27, 1959, 4; Ora Shamir, “Pogrom,” *Kol ha-‘Am*, 3 September 1965, 3; Yosef Ben-Meir, “*Alfei Tzeirot Yehudiut Ovdot be-Ohalei ‘Arav...* (Thousands of Young Jewish Women are Lost in the Tents of Arabia...),” *ha-Tzofe*, 28 November 1969, 5. For discussions of cinematic and literary representations of the theme, including the treatment of the “desirous Arab” in “I am Ahmad,” see: Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), chapter 7; Yochai Oppenheimer, *Me‘ever la-Gader: Yitzug ha-‘Aravim ba-Siporet ha-‘Ivrit u-ha-Yisraelit (1906-2005)* [Barriers: The Representation of the Arab in Hebrew and Israeli Fiction, 1906-2005] (Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘Oved, 2008).

When work took individuals to “mixed” cities such as Acre or Haifa, or even areas of Tel Aviv close enough to Jaffa, workers could at times rent a room or an apartment, usually from Palestinian owners who had managed to hold on to their property. Bring enough men together and you could rent an apartment, as Shawqi Khoury recalls doing in Acre in 1955.⁴²⁷ Ibrahim Shamshoum rented a room in Jaffa with six or seven other people in the late 1950s: “There was no kitchen. We cooked in the room, we ate in the room, and we slept in the room. And early in the morning we would go to work in construction.”⁴²⁸ When Lutuf Suleiman (b. 1950) of Bu‘ineh was fourteen and a half, he worked in sewage construction in Haifa. He and others rented rooms in the homes of Palestinian families in the city’s Wadi Salib neighborhood.⁴²⁹

Renting an apartment or even a room was not always an option, however. In Jewish cities and towns, where most construction took place, finding property owners who would agree to rent rooms to Arabs could be extremely difficult. Of the narrators, only one reported even having tried to do so - Ahmad Masarweh - who through trials and tribulations, eventually found some success. As will be discussed below, Ahmad eventually made creating spaces for himself and other Palestinians in Jewish cities, particularly Tel Aviv, a political cause. Before turning to his public struggle, however, it is important to look at what alternatives he and other workers had to endure.

⁴²⁷ Interview with Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

⁴²⁸ Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, ‘Arrabe, October 12, 2018.

⁴²⁹ Interview with Lutuf Suleiman, Bu‘eine, October 19, 2018.

Hidden in Plain Sight

Multiple narrators reported living on-site during construction – making them effectively the first residents of the homes they were building for others. Despite finding a job early-on with Solel Boneh, in the years immediately following 1948 Shawqi Khoury also took on work privately. In 1955 he worked in the northern cooperative settlement, ‘Avdon, with fifteen other men from Fassuta. Since none had a permit to work there, they risked the journey to ‘Avdon only once every two weeks, riding in the back of a truck covered in a canvas sheet, as though they were cargo. Living conditions at the ‘Avdon site evolved as work progressed:

You asked where we would eat? Where we would sleep? ...Eating, I organized my people from Fassuta. Each one would bring food. We took burghul, we took lentils, we took all sorts of things. And I told them, guys, instead of each one cooking, I'll cook, I know how. I would cook for fifteen people. We made a wooden table, and they [the workers] would come like soldiers in the army: each one would take his portion..... We would sleep under the open sky (*tahat kipat ha-shamaim*).... In the field, on the same site. Until you build one house, place the roof tiles, and go inside.... To shower, we would stand on a rock, open the hose and shower like that. That's how it was. It was like that in several places, and then it started to get better.⁴³⁰

Shawqi and his peers created what he remembers as a positive living space in ‘Avdon. The invocation of a military-style order in speaking of the eating arrangements also indicates the decidedly masculine models he viewed their time there through in retrospect. However, the relative freedom experienced in a fledgling, remote settlement was difficult to obtain in a Jewish urban context. There matters of class and racism could encroach on workers' attempts to use the worksite as a temporary home. The sort of

⁴³⁰ Interview with Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

invisibility forced upon Palestinian workers in these contexts was qualitatively different to that which Shawqi and his peers employed on the back of the truck en route to ‘Avdon and back. It was no longer merely a tactic to evade the persecution of the military administration and its regulations. Rather it was the product of broader social pressures requiring that Palestinian workers, as racialized and therefore hyper-visible subjects, “disappear” at the end of the workday, reappearing only once the next shift began.⁴³¹

When Ibrahim Zahalqa first worked in construction at the age of twenty, he was employed as a plasterer in a complex of sixteen-story tall buildings in northern Tel Aviv. Ibrahim describes the living arrangements there:

I would sleep on site, but the person we worked for there, he would say, “look, the people who live here in Neve Avivim, these are aristocratic people,” I mean, “these are big people (*anashim gdolim*) and they have a lot of money, and they want to live where even looking [i.e., even what they see] won’t disturb them. And [while] you’re sleeping here, we don’t want you to go outside so that they will see you. [If] you sleep here, stay in the rooms or go somewhere where they can’t see you.” It was really like that.... Before, there were Druze [workers] there, and they [the neighbors] saw them, and made sure they were driven out.⁴³²

The fate of the Druze workers made it clear to Ibrahim and his colleagues that it was in their interest to do as their employer and the “aristocratic” neighbors demanded.

⁴³¹ Two theorists of the hyper-visibility of the racialized, and particularly the black body, are Franz Fanon and George Yancy. Helen Ngo notes that in the thinking of both Fanon and Yancy such hyper-visibility, particularly of black men, is “usually bound with associations of danger and violence,” as in Yancy’s discussion of the “elevator effect” and in Fanon’s description of his encounter with a “little white boy” terrified by Fanon’s blackness. In both, the result of this sense of hyper-visibility as threat is an alienation from one’s own body. Without drawing a facile equation between the experiences of blackness in the colonial metropole or the United States and that of Palestinian-ness in Israel/Palestine, it is nonetheless important, in my view, to acknowledge their similarities, particularly in order to draw upon the critical insight of the many scholars of race who focus on blackness. Ngo, *The Habits of Racism*, Chapter 2; George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), especially Chapter 1; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), especially Chapter 5.

⁴³² Interview with Ibrahim Zahalqa, Kafr Qar’, October 7, 2018.

They made themselves, as best they could, invisible. Of course, such “invisibility” could only have been tenuous at best. Throughout the day, their work was extremely visible, audible and otherwise an assault on the senses, as anyone who has lived close to a massive construction project will attest. The neighbors in Neve Avivim were willing to accept the presence of Palestinian workers only during working hours. Otherwise, they wanted Ibrahim and his coworkers to be hidden in plain sight.⁴³³

Ibrahim and his coworkers at Neve Avivim were hardly the only Palestinian construction workers rendered hidden in plain sight. Arguably the entire phenomenon of construction work’s “Palestinianization” was (and remains) dependent upon the work of Palestinians in Israel’s construction industry being invisible in various ways: physically, legally, and culturally. All the while, the products and processes of their work, even their own physical presences in Israel’s essentially segregated landscapes, were often hyper-visible. Accordingly, as in other structures of “invisible labor” in which work and workers are “hidden in plain sight,” some of those seeking to overturn this regime of invisibility engaged in what Timothy Pachirat has called “the politics of sight”: “organized, concerted attempts to make visible what is hidden and to breach, literally or figuratively, zones of confinement in order to bring about social and political transformation.”⁴³⁴

⁴³³ I borrow the term “hidden in plain sight” from Timothy Pachirat’s 2011 political ethnography about a Nebraska slaughterhouse, *Every Twelve Seconds*. Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). For a recent study of a qualitatively different form of invisibility, defined as “immersive invisibility,” which primarily middle-class Palestinian citizens experience and practice in contemporary Tel Aviv, see: Hackl, “Immersive Invisibility.”

⁴³⁴ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 23. “Invisible labor/work,” have for some time now been the object of considerable study, particularly among sociologists. Originally applied in the 1980s as a concept describing

In early 1960s Israel, Ahmad Masarweh enlisted such “politics of sight” to launch a public campaign that would make workers like himself and their work visible. He enlisted private individuals, the controversial Hebrew weekly *ha-‘Olam ha-Ze* (*This World*), and as mentioned above, even made the short docudrama, “I am Ahmad,” alongside several partners. The experiences Ahmad’s campaign and the film exposed reveal the two final types of homes Palestinian construction workers tried to make for themselves in the Jewish city. The first, the encampment, was often the bleakest and most physically harsh, hardly deserving of the moniker “home” at all. The second, renting an apartment or a room in a “Jewish” environment, made the underlying racialization process driving Palestinian exclusion perhaps most apparent.

During our conversation, Ahmad recalls taking journalists from *ha-‘Olam ha-Ze* to workers’ encampments in the area by Wadi al-Musrara/the Ayalon River – where Highway 20 runs today - which separated Tel Aviv from its easternmost

unpaid work carried out primarily by women and not recognized as labor, the concept has since been expanded to encompass the unrecognized emotional and habitual components of labor, so-called “virtual” and production labor carried out remotely and hidden from consumers, the purposeful erasure of workers’ racial/ethnic identities in certain industries, physically sequestered forms of work, and more. Calls for expanding the concept’s scope have been accompanied by attempts to better define it as an analytic category. To do so, Erin Hatton has suggested that invisible work/labor be defined as “labor that is economically devalued through three intersecting sociological mechanisms... cultural, legal and spatial mechanisms of invisibility – which operate in different ways and to different degrees.” These mechanisms, Hatton is careful to point out, are “intersectional and mutually constitutive.” There can be little doubt, it seems to me, that the history of Palestinian citizens’ work in Israel’s construction industry during the period under study here and beyond, demonstrates the parallel workings of all three mechanisms Hatton identifies. See: Erin Hatton, “Mechanisms of Invisibility: Rethinking the Concept of Invisible Work,” *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol 31, No. 2 (2017): 336-351; Marion G. Crain, Winifred R. Poster, and Miriam A. Cherry, eds., *Invisible Labour: Hidden Work in the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); Jill Esbenshade, “The ‘Crisis’ over Day Labour: The Politics of Visibility and Public Space,” *WorkingUSA*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (March/April 2000): 27-70; Arlie Russel Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, third edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012 [1983]); Arlene Kaplan Daniels, “Invisible Work,” *Social Problems*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (Dec., 1987): 403-415.

neighborhoods.⁴³⁵ The newspaper, known for its penchant for the shocking and an anti-establishment editorial line, published a story, “A Jungle in the Heart of the City,” accompanied by photographs of the encampments. Shalom Cohen, a leftist Iraqi Jew who was a fierce critic of Israel’s Labor Zionist leadership and co-editor of the newspaper, painted a shocking picture. The workers lived “in conditions fit for animals.... In the foul-smelling Wadi Musrara.” Their beds were made, by “spreading rags on the ground; placing a blanket over the rags; under their head they place their work clothes. In the winter? They place rusted tins over the blanket.”⁴³⁶

In one part of the encampment, workers lived in cramped, scorching tin shacks they rented from their Jewish owner. Nine workers per shack. Cohen mentions also a disused industrial cowshed, whose owner realized that Arab tenants paid much better than raising cows. This arrangement was deemed illegal for fear of spreading disease – the article does not mention which disease in particular - and was terminated. The workers then relocated to the adjacent fields.

The captions that accompanied the photographs in the article (figs. 5.1-5.3) mapped the geography of the encampment onto the spatial division of a contemporary middle-class home, complete with guest room, dining room, bedroom, kitchen, and hallway. They thus explicitly drew a comparison to the kinds of spaces *ha-‘Olam ha-Ze’s* readers likely inhabited, quite possibly even as they were reading the article. Cohen’s

⁴³⁵ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018.

⁴³⁶ “*Jungel be-Lev ha-‘Ir* (A Jungle in the Heart of the City),” *ha-‘Olam ha-Ze*, July 24, 1963, 10-11. The article itself does not credit a writer, but Shalom Cohen revealed that he wrote it when referring back to it in a column three and a half years later, see: Shalom Cohen, “*Kor’e Yakar* (Dear Reader),” *ha-‘Olam ha-Ze*, February 15, 1967, 2.

choice to narrate the readers' visual tour in this sarcastic manner, was no doubt intended to throw the severity of the conditions the Palestinian workers lived in into stark relief.



Fig. 5.1 "The Guestroom"

Caption: "The guestroom is a few beds in a field of thorns. The Arab workers sit on the torn mattresses after work, receiving their friends who come visit them from the other end of the field. During work hours they leave a teenager here to guard their belongings."



Fig. 5.2 "The Dining Room"

Caption: "The dining room of the members of the Galilean 'Arab al-Sawa'ed tribe is simply furnished: some empty sacks are used as chairs. In the center: the morning newspaper fills the role of the table. The workers cooked the food over a fire in the 'kitchen' adjacent to the dining room. After the meal they will move to the bedrooms – a long line of iron beds, which cover about a quarter of the thicket of thorns."

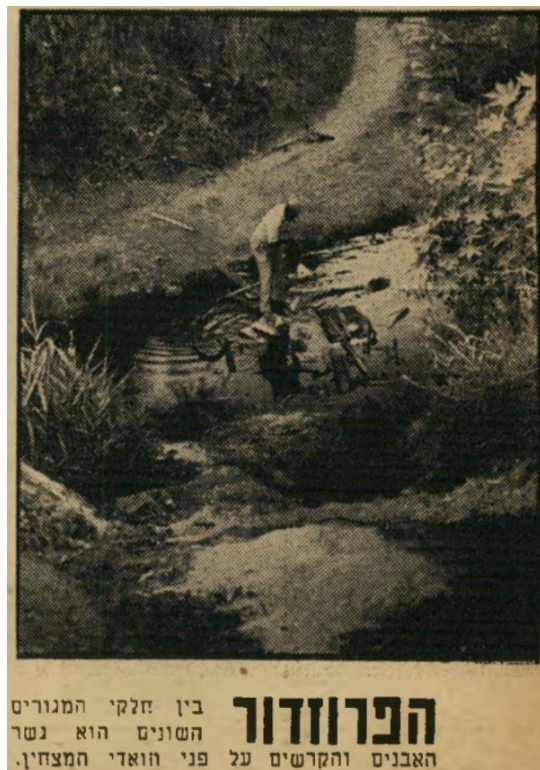


Fig. 5.3 "The Hallway"
Caption: "The hallway between the different residential areas is the bridge of stones and planks across the foul-smelling wadi."

Cohen's article placed emphasis not only on the harsh conditions but also on differentiating the genesis of workers' encampments, like the one he visited, from "tin-neighborhoods" (*shkhunot pahim*) elsewhere. Unlike elsewhere in the world, the forces creating Tel-Aviv's encampments were not economic at all, argued Cohen, but rooted in a socially upheld racial segregation

Tel Aviv's jungle is unlike any other.... Those who live there are not starving unemployed. Rather they are workers who do not earn badly, who work more or less regularly, and who are in professions for which there is demand. They could certainly afford to rent a decent room. But they can't.... No one will rent to them, because they are Arabs. Part of the force of thousands who work in the hard, physical jobs in Tel Aviv and its surroundings.⁴³⁷

Cohen then relates stories of workers being rejected by property owners once their Arabness was revealed, or neighbors physically trying to prevent Palestinian renters from moving in, with "children and mothers" shouting abuse at them. Such scenarios were also highlighted in "I am Ahmad." In one scene, Ahmad and a friend, Mahmud, go looking for a room to rent in Tel Aviv. We are told that they have been rejected in six of seven apartments they visited. Approaching the seventh, Mahmud suggests they present themselves with the Mizrahi sounding Hebrew names Avraham Mizrahi and Yosef Malul of *Hevel Lakhish* (the Lakhish Region).⁴³⁸ Ahmad refuses and walks away, while

⁴³⁷ "Jungel be-Lev ha-'Ir," 10-11.

⁴³⁸ From the mid-1950s until the early 1960s the Israeli government undertook a mass project of settling primarily Mizrahi Jews in the Lakhish Region. For a recent critical study of the settlement project, which is also attuned to the racial dynamics that shaped it, see: Smadar Sharon, "*Kakh Kovshim Moledet*".

Mahmud enters the apartment. A shot of Mahmud's arm opening a window from the inside seems to indicate that as "Avraham," he may even have been able to rent it.⁴³⁹

Following the 1963 article in *ha-'Olam ha-Ze*, Ahmad Masarweh's public campaign seemed to have gained some traction. Government officials discussed the question of establishing a government-run company to build accommodations for Palestinian workers in Jewish cities and officially decided to do so in January 1965.⁴⁴⁰ However, by February 15, 1967 when Shalom Cohen dedicated his regular column to the film "I am Ahmad," the government's initiative had dissipated. "Perhaps because the problem was almost completely solved," Cohen writes, "[n]ot by building cheap accommodations but by the recession." "The first to be hurt," he clarifies, "were the scores of Arab workers, concentrated mostly in construction. Due to lack of work, they went back to their villages and stayed there."⁴⁴¹

A "politics of sight" of the sort Ahmad and his partners sought to enact in their campaign, has, as Timothy Pachirat reminds us, both "possibilities and pitfalls."⁴⁴² In

⁴³⁹ The practice of passing as Jewish is also highlighted elsewhere in the film, when Ahmad Sabr Masarweh, the voiceover narrator, relates the story of another Palestinian worker, Jamal, who after being beat once, when he was the sole Arab working at a factory, started presenting himself as "Yitzhak", a Hebrew name, and wearing a Star of David necklace. Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, as noted above, had presented himself as "Tzvi" for a prolonged period as a teenager. Ahmad's refusal to engage in passing in the film, in contrast to his real-life experiences, calls attention to the sense of loss which accompanies passing, beyond the social, economic, and political gains it entails. This loss is the focal point of Allyson Hobbs cultural history of passing, *A Chosen Exile*. See: Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). For works investigating passing in Palestine/Israel, see fn. 417 above.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ha-Olam ha-Ze*, January 13, 1965, 26.

⁴⁴¹ Shalom Cohen, "Kor'e Yakar (Dear Reader)," *ha-'Olam ha-Ze*, February 15, 1967, 2. What Cohen describes in the article, Palestinian workers being the first to be hurt by the recession, seems to have been part of a broader discriminatory phenomenon. Several narrators mentioned events when Palestinian workers were singled out as "the first to go" at times when project managers decided to fire workers due to financial conditions. Interviews with Muhammad Abu Ahmad, Nazareth, October 20, 2018 and with Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

⁴⁴² Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 255.

Pachirat's study of a Nebraska slaughterhouse, he points out how within the slaughterhouse a vantage point of total visibility exists alongside internal compartmentalization and sequestration which hide "repulsive practices" even at the very site on which they take place. Moreover, "[e]ven when intended as a tactic of social and political transformation," Pachirat points out, "the act of making the hidden visible may be equally likely to generate other, more effective ways of confining it."⁴⁴³

In the case of the Israeli construction industry's exploitative employment of Palestinian workers, it was an event external to the industry, the 1967 war, which generated conditions even more conducive for such concealment. Shortly after the war, the Israeli construction industry began absorbing non-citizen Palestinian subjects from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip as workers. The latter rapidly eclipsed Palestinians with Israeli citizenship in their share in the industry's workforce. Their exploitation within the construction industry and in the Israeli labor market in general, took place on an even greater scale, its concealment abetted by even greater degrees of physical, political, and social separation and new forms of racialization.⁴⁴⁴

West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians were devoid of citizenship and of the social rights and protections which Palestinian citizens had gradually won over the previous decades. In one of the tragedies of Palestinian twentieth-century history, just as the latter were gradually relieved of the restrictions of Israel's internal military administration – which, as noted above, were a key component in pushing Palestinian citizens in Israel to seek exploitative "informal" employment in the construction industry

⁴⁴³ Pachirat, 253.

⁴⁴⁴ Leila Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel*; Portugali, *Implicate Relations*.

– the former were placed under a new form of military rule. The encounter of West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians with the Israeli labor market was shaped, with even greater intensity, by much of what shaped the participation of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship in the Israeli labor market in the period covered here – land expropriation, de-development, restrictions on movement and employment.⁴⁴⁵ From the standpoint of Jewish Israeli public opinion, Palestinians from the occupied territories were several degrees further removed than Palestinian citizens of the state. “Israeli Arabs” (or “the Arabs of Israel”), as the official terminology of the state came to refer to Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, remained a suspect population and remained discriminated against, to be sure, but the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were more foreign and more suspicious still.⁴⁴⁶

Ahmad’s campaign was as personal as it was political. Like several of the other narrators, he spent a considerable part of his life as a political and public figure. Unlike most of them, however, Ahmad’s political and social circles were often centered in Tel Aviv and around figures on the Jewish radical left.⁴⁴⁷ The list of names he mentioned in our conversations could serve as a veritable who’s who of radical Jewish politics and

⁴⁴⁵ Yael Berda, *Living Emergency: Israel’s Permit Regime in the Occupied West Bank*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Sara M. Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of de-Development*, third edition (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2016 [1986]); Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel*; Portugali, *Implicate Relations*.

⁴⁴⁶ On the significance of the term “Israeli Arabs,” see: Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, 43-44.

⁴⁴⁷ Early on Ahmad was involved with Uri Avneri and Shalom Cohen’s *ha-‘Olam ha-Ze - Koah Hadash* (This World – A New Force) party, a radical party (although Avneri’s “radical” credentials have often come under scrutiny) which ran for the Israeli Knesset in 1965 and 1969, and with the Socialist Organization in Israel, an organization founded in 1962 by ex-Communist Party members pushed out of the party due to their criticism of the Soviet Union. The Socialist Organization of Israel is more commonly known by the name of its monthly publication, *Matzpen* (Compass). Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018.

culture in 1960s Tel Aviv. I understand his attempts to fight not only for the visibility of Palestinian workers and their rights, but specifically for spaces for them *in* the Jewish city, as tied to his own sense of belonging to Tel Aviv. At one point during our first conversation, he stated, “I’m a Tel Avivian (*ani Tel Avivi*).”⁴⁴⁸

Of the rich textual and audio-visual archive his activism generated, one apparently inconsequential item embodies this personal-political nexus of Ahmad’s homemaking efforts best. On the bottom of page four of the December 20, 1967 issue of *ha-‘Olam ha-Ze*, a small nondescript ad (fig. 5.4) reads in Hebrew: “Arab youth. Works and studies in Tel Aviv. Looking for a room. Call during work hours for Ahmad Masarweh, Tel. No. 33264, Tel Aviv.” I asked Ahmad about the ad, which he had not mentioned in our conversations, during a phone call. He explained: “I was tired of being rejected by apartment owners. I thought that being explicit might be the best option, just saying it – “Arab youth” - and seeing what happens.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ Ahmad’s refusal today to consider a politics of separation in Israel/Palestine is also rooted in this experience. He uses a Yiddish expression to express this refusal, driving the point further still: ‘I don’t believe in, in a matter of Arabs and Jews, and not in two states, it’s all, you don’t know Yiddish do you? It’s all *katle kanyes* [Yiddish: someone with no skill or knowledge]. Because you can’t separate. If you ask me, my whole being, used to be the friends in Tel Aviv. [When people] ask my wife how I look so well, she says, “it’s because of his friends.”’ Interview with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ha-‘Olam ha-Ze*, December 20, 1967, 4; personal communication with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, February 6, 2019.

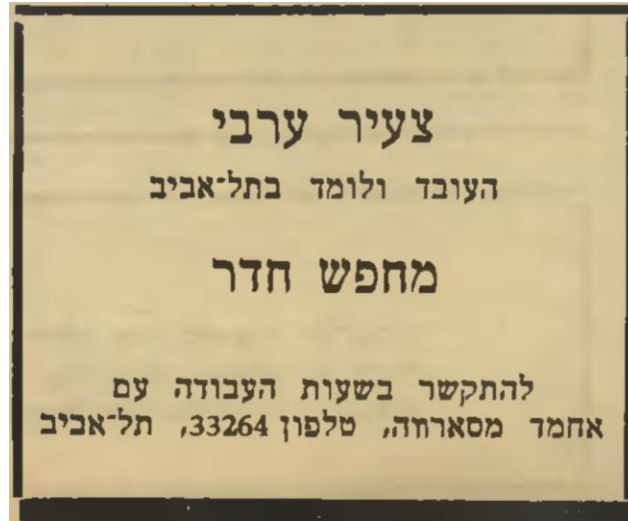


Fig. 5.4 “Arab youth working and studying in Tel Aviv looking for room.”

Remaking the Home

Palestinian citizens in Israel incorporated in the first decades of the state into the construction industry were forced to make multiple forms of homes away from home. They transformed construction sites and fields into temporary dwellings, wrestled with the tensions and contradictions of making themselves at home in effectively segregated Jewish cities and towns, sometimes even found surrogate families. The fragility of Palestinian existence within Israel during those decades, meanwhile, meant that all these homes away from home could be hanging on a thread. At the same time, uncertainty and grief in the wake of catastrophe and the host of restrictive policies limiting Palestinian citizens' ability to build, work, and move, meant that they also needed to make their own homes and communities anew. This remaking was in part a matter of building better lives and better opportunities for themselves and their families, often through funding education with construction work's wages, as discussed above. It was

also, however, a material process of physical building and rebuilding in the face of poverty and state restrictions.

As part of a broader strategy of “Judaization,”⁴⁵⁰ Israeli state policy, which both the military administration and the planning organs of the Ministry of the Interior enacted, actively sought to limit Palestinian construction which could expand villages’ built areas onto lands expropriated by the state. An effective ban on such expansion, which annulled previous British planning legislation, was instituted in 1955 by the Regional Planning Committee for the Northern District and then expanded in January 1957. Later that year, the Regional Planning Committee partnered with the military administration to author new local plans for Palestinian localities. These plans defined areas for high-density and low-density construction of dwellings, all within the scope of the existing built areas. The plans were intended to further – and it was hoped, more effectively – curtail villages’ territorial “expansion,” and to encourage internal migration to urban centers as village centers became oversaturated. Moreover, until the late 1960s, most Palestinian localities had no state-recognized local council (Hebrew: *mo‘atza mekomit*), and accordingly, no locally devised construction town-planning, nor the ability to grant permits for construction.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ For the concept of Judaization, “the spatial, political, and discursive forces associated with Jewish expansion and control over Israel/Palestine,” see: Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*; Falah, “Israeli ‘Judaization’ Policy in the Galilee.”

⁴⁵¹ Yair Bäuml, “Israel’s Military Rule over its Palestinian Citizens (1948-1968): Shaping the Israeli Segregation System,” in *Israel and its Palestinian Citizens: Ethnic Privileges in the Jewish State*, eds. Nadim N. Rouhana and Sahar S. Huneidi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 118; Yosef Jabareen and Hakam Dbiat, *Adrikhalut ve-Orientalizm ba-Aretz* [Architecture and Orientalism in the Country] (Haifa: ha-Merkaz le-Heker ha-‘Ir ve-ha-Ezor, 2014), 261; Bäuml, *Tzel Kahol Lavan*, 142-145; Rassem Khamaisi, *Mi-Tikhnun Magbil le-Tikhnun Mefateah ba-Yishuvim ha-‘Aravi’im be-Israel* [From Restrictive Planning to Developmental Planning in Arab Localities in Israel] (Jerusalem: The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1993), 8-12.

These policies did in fact achieve the intended overcrowding of Palestinian towns and villages. However, they were unsuccessful in preventing Palestinian citizens from building both within the localities' built-areas and beyond them. To the extent that construction permits were granted in Palestinian localities, they intentionally did not meet the population's needs. The result, rather than being the hoped-for migration of younger Palestinians to urban centers, however, was the emergence of self-constructed, permit-less homes both within and beyond the village centers, as well as a distinct architecture.

Workers, their families and their communities pooled their resources and the experience, skills, and knowledge workers had gained largely through construction work in the Jewish sector, to craft their own homes. Unable to pay for hired labor, work was done voluntarily by members of the community, thus bridging the technical and material gaps between "traditional" practices of communal building - of the sort captured in a by now famous photograph from the Matson Collection (fig. 5.5) - and the housing emergency in which the Palestinian citizens in Israel found themselves.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵² For studies of "traditional" Palestinian construction methods and house types, see: Tawfiq Canaan, *The Palestinian Arab House*; Ron Fuchs, "The Palestinian Arab House and the Islamic 'Primitive Hut,'" *Muqarnas*, Vol. 15 (1998): 157-177. Recent works move from the "traditional" to newer methods and call particular attention to the reliance on self-construction among Palestinian citizens in Israel in the decades following the *Nakba*. See: Jabareen and Dbiat, *Adrikhalut u-Orientalizm ba-Aretz*, especially Chapter 6; Allweil, *Homeland: Zionism as Housing Regime, 1860-2011* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), Chapter 7; Abed Badran, *Space Design, Making and Tectonics in Palestinian architecture in Israel: Impacts of the Israeli Project* (PhD diss., Cardiff University, 2017).



Fig. 5.5 “Building Stone House in Village in Hill Country.”
Stenograph of communal building practices in early 20th century Palestine. Photographer Unknown, Matson Collection, Library of Congress.

Perhaps the epitome of such communal construction efforts was the moment of casting the concrete for a new home’s roof. Even narrators who did not invoke communal construction methods otherwise, almost invariably referred to such practices when I presented them with a copy of the chapter discussing construction workers’ songs from ‘Ali al-Khalili’s *Aghani al-‘Amal wa-l-‘Umal fi-Filastin* (*Songs of Work and Workers in Palestine*). No one recalled the sort of elaborately crafted songs that al-Khalili discusses from the construction sites they worked on (“No one had the time to sing!” Lutuf Suleiman remarked). However, all narrators paused when they read the first line of the limekiln song “*Wali‘ al-Latun* (Fire up the Kiln).” “We say *wali ‘al-baṭon* [fire up/pour

the concrete],” Ibrahim Zahalqa said, “so that people don’t tire, everyone starts saying:

‘*wali‘ al-baṭon wali‘, wali‘ al-baṭon wali‘*’ [Ibrahim chants].”⁴⁵³

As with the communal building practices of the past, many described such communal construction, particularly the casting of concrete towards a structure’s completion, as cross-generational and cross-gender. Shawqi Khoury also immediately recalled the chant: “This one I know!” He exclaimed and began singing. He then remembered how both men and women would carry buckets of concrete up ladders to pour it (although when he built his house in Fassuta in 1955, he points out, “there were enough men, so we didn’t have women”). Ahmad Masarweh too began singing, ‘the workers [here] wouldn’t take wages... the neighbors, the workers would come and when we would cast the roof, they would say “*wali‘ al-baṭon, wali‘*.”’⁴⁵⁴

While such practices invoked a connection to traditional building practices, narrators also described workers utilizing their expertise in newly acquired professions – formwork, ironwork, electrical work, plumbing, and more. In describing the process, Muhammad Abu Ahmad of Nazareth once again shows his penchant, perhaps cultivated through years of fulfilling roles in the Histadrut, for subverting and laying claim to Zionist tropes. He recalls a representative of the Histadrut’s Culture Department, who

⁴⁵³ ‘Ali al-Khalili, *Aghani al-‘Amal wa-l-‘Umal fi-Filastin* [Songs of Labour and Labourers in Palestine], second edition (Beirut: Dar Ibn Khaldun, 1980 [1979]), 88-89; Interviews with Ibrahim Zahalqa, Kafr Qar‘, October 7, 2018 and Lutuf Suleiman, Bu‘eine, October 19, 2018. Basma Fahoum has called my attention to another variation of this song, *wali‘ al-babour*. This iteration refers to *al-babour*, an Arabicization of the Turkish “vapur”, which itself was adopted from the French or English, “vapour” or “vapor”. In this instance, *al-babour* extends beyond meaning a steam engine, and refers to any kind of engine or gas stove/burner. The song was sung by children in anticipation of the starting of an engine or gas stove. “*Wali‘ ...*,” is thus revealed to be at a sung juncture between carbon-hungry systems - limekilns, motor engines, stoves and concrete.

⁴⁵⁴ Interviews with Ahmad Yusuf Masarweh, ‘Ar‘ara, October 10, 2018, Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018 and Sadeq Dallahseh, Bu‘eine, October 19, 2018.

invoked mutual assistance (‘*ezra hadadit*’) as a uniquely Zionist organizational principle.

Muhammad responded:

I told him, listen, for us [Palestinians] this mutual assistance was natural. With you it’s planned. You used your brains [to figure out] what is good for the society in Israel.... But for us it’s natural. He said, “How do you mean?” I said that when someone wants to build a house in our neighborhood, the people from the neighborhood who do excavations come and do the excavation for the foundations for free. When they’re done, everyone who is a form worker comes.... Then the ironworker comes.... Casting [concrete], everyone comes, everyone gathers “there’s a concrete pouring at Nimrod’s, *yalla*, everyone come!” Everyone comes and helps during the concrete casting. When the concrete’s done, who’s a plasterer in the neighborhood? The plasterer and two others come, in two-three days they finish the plastering, volunteers. Same thing for an electrician, plumbing, carpentry. He asked me, “Is it really like that?” I said, “What do you think, that the Israeli state built our houses? You the Jews had your houses built for you; we built our own. That’s mutual assistance (‘*ezra hadadit*’).”⁴⁵⁵

This communal pooling of skills served to introduce new construction techniques and materials, as well as new spatial arrangements and architectural forms to Palestinian homes within Israel. Studies of post-1948 Palestinian architecture have examined these changes and given the new forms various names: Yosef Jabareen and Hakam Dbiat’s, “post-traumatic architecture,” Yael Allweil’s “*ṣumud* (steadfastness) architecture,” and Abed Badran’s “crush and transform.” They document the same material and spatial shifts workers and their families described in my conversations with them: a move away from stone construction to reinforced concrete, and the increased division of the home into spaces defined according to function, in place of the “traditional” single-space home.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Muhammad Abu Ahmad, Nazareth, October 20, 2018.

⁴⁵⁶ For the single-space village house, see: Jabareen and Dbiat, *Architecture and Orientalism*, 246-253; Allweil, *Homeland*, 88-92; Fuchs, “The Palestinian Arab House,” 158-162. For the characteristics of new

Where workers' testimonies diverge from architectural scholarship is in their ability to animate and claim the agency that drove these adaptations, which otherwise appear to be driven primarily by abstract concepts and forces, or forever awaiting their absent planners and architects.⁴⁵⁷ Ibrahim Shamshoum holds great pride in his record of construction in 'Arrabe and in the architectural and technical innovations he introduced to the city's (then still a village) built environment, starting with his own home:

When we travelled to the city we became aware of the developments in construction, and we wanted to implement them in our town. For example, if I was building a house, building a beautiful house in Haifa, or in Tel Aviv, or in Jerusalem, I wanted to have a beautiful house here as well. I mean, I, when I built my house, [then] for the first time, I thought that the boy should have a room, the girl should have a room, [there should be] a parlor, a bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom. Before there wasn't that [kind of construction in 'Arrabe], very little.⁴⁵⁸

Ibrahim repeatedly referred to the expertise he and others gained while working in Tel Aviv and elsewhere as *khibra*, knowledge learned through experience. When he brought this expertise with him back to 'Arrabe, its application was not limited just to introducing internal divisions to a home which was until then frequently constructed

"types" of architecture which emerged in Palestinian villages in Israel in the wake of 1948, see: Jabareen and Dbiat, *Architecture and Orientalism*, 288-300; Allweil, *Homeland*, 208-213; Badran, *Space Design, Making and Tectonics*, 389-419. Of the three works, only Jabareen and Dbiat's makes mention of the preponderance of "skilled local manpower in the construction industry," which they list among the "advantages" of what they have termed the "post-traumatic model" of Palestinian housing.

⁴⁵⁷ In this sense, these narratives allow us to follow Farha Ghannam's suggestion that we examine the construction of modern built environments as the product not only of "planners and political figures," but also of what she calls, following Michel de Certeau, "the ordinary practitioners of the city." Although Ghannam's research focuses on the Cairene metropolis and on forced migrations driven by development economics, there are notable similarities in the practices and perceptions of what constitutes "modern" housing among the residents of the northeastern Cairo neighborhood of al-Zawiya al-Hamra and the individuals I interviewed. Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), esp. Chapters 2 and 6.

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, 'Arrabe, October 12, 2018.

around one shared space, but also to technical aspects of the work. “We learned to make concrete bands, how to make columns, how to cast a roof,” he explains,

I was one of the first to have such a house and I transmitted the knowledge which I learned to our town. I mean, I’m not an engineer, but I have more experience than an engineer in building houses, in homes. I’ve seen many very beautiful things [i.e., buildings] when I was working in construction and I carried many things in my head (*naqalt be-rasi ktir shaghlal*) which we [then] used in ‘Arrabe.⁴⁵⁹

Ibrahim’s approach to his role in changing ‘Arrabe’s built landscape, portrays him and others like him as the active and purposeful transmitters of innovations they “carried” with them as they moved between segregated locations. Still, it is important to note that although Ibrahim emphasizes the ideas he “carried in his head,” which could be understood as emphasizing an abstract intellectual contribution, these could not be separated from the embodied skills and capacities he and others acquired and transmitted.

And yet, precisely because the process of building a home relied upon communal support and the skills, knowledge, and workforce collectively at their disposal, construction required another resource which poverty and the military administration rendered invaluable: time. Construction workers with relatively stable jobs which allowed them to be home every day, found themselves working a “second shift” on a regular basis. “When we started working for Solel Boneh,” Shawqi Khoury says, “you would work a regular eight hours. After eight hours I would go back [home] and help people build for another five or six.”⁴⁶⁰ For these workers, the first shift of the day was as a salaried worker, often working on one of the massive housing projects the Israeli state

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, ‘Arrabe, October 12, 2018.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Shawqi Khoury, Tarshiha, October 21, 2018.

carried out to house Jewish immigrants during the decades after 1948. The second began once you arrived back home. It was dedicated to building your home and community anew in the wake of the Nakba and in the shadow of ongoing dispossession and marginalization.

Moreover, unlike the first shift, which saw Palestinian men working in an almost entirely masculinized construction industry, the second shift also fostered the defiance of these increasingly rigid gendered boundaries. Palestinian women were integral to the (re)construction work carried during on the second shift. And although many women at the time were not employed in salaried work, they were engaged in multiple forms of unpaid labor both in and outside the home. It was their second shift too.⁴⁶¹

William Andraos (b. 1943), from Tarshiha, began working for Solel Boneh in 1960. Our conversation was conducted in the presence of his wife, their daughter in law, and Anis and Leila Khoury, who introduced me to William. This format, between an interview and a family gathering, seemed less than ideal, but the dynamic between the Andraos couple, who go by Abu Jamil and Umm Jamil, ended up producing some of the most fascinating narratives I was able to take part in.⁴⁶² After Abu Jamil described how

⁴⁶¹ With the “second shift,” as with “invisible work/labor,” I am making use of a term originally coined within feminist sociology. Arlie Hochschild originally developed the concept of the second shift to describe how American women remained responsible for most labor at home (the work of child-rearing, care, and other forms of “housework”) despite their dramatic incorporation into the US workforce. Examining primarily middle-class working women, Hochschild observed that rather than this change fostering a more egalitarian household within which labor was shared, many women found themselves working two “shifts” on a daily basis – one as salaried employees, the second at home. Hochschild’s work is focused on what she refers to as the “stalled revolution” in the late twentieth century American home and the development of American capitalism. The Palestinian case clarifies, however, that similarly institutionalized second shifts which were driven by discrimination, have arisen in drastically different historical circumstances and in different forms. Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*, third edition, (New York: Penguin Books, 2012 [1989]).

⁴⁶² See “The Narrators” section above.

difficult work was and decried the waning of his physical strength, Umm Jamil

interjected:

Umm Jamil: Listen, after work, after four, he would come back home, when we were building the house here.... [A]fter he would come back, at four thirty I would cook, he would eat, drink a cup of coffee and then start working [again], everything by hand, I helped him.

Abu Jamil: We built this building, me and my wife.

Umm Jamil: This whole building, this house, he built.⁴⁶³

While Abu Jamil clearly sought to share the credit for building their home, Umm Jamil seemed hesitant to emphasize her role. Our conversation then moved onto the specifics of the construction of the Andraos home, from details regarding the flooring, to the time certain tasks took. Anis and Leila also interjected occasionally, explaining that “this was how things were done” that is, cooperatively and voluntarily, in contrast to how they perceived commercial construction in Tarshiha took place now. Then Anis, who had worked under Abu Jamil at Solel Boneh in the late 1960s, brought the conversation back to the Andraos couple’s joint work. This time, with both Anis and Abu Jamil gently insisting on discussing the construction process as one which the Andraos couple shared in, Umm Jamil was more forthcoming about her experience as well. As she spoke, she increasingly underscored how her role in their home’s construction defied the otherwise distinct gendering of construction work:

Anis Khoury: He and his wife [built the house].

Abu Jamil: Me and my wife.

Umm Jamil: I’m his assistant [Umm Jamil uses the term *‘ozer*, the Hebrew word for a male assistant].

Nimrod: That’s really interesting. Tell me what you did, when you were building the house together?

Umm Jamil: I did every task... In our roof we have this beam...

⁴⁶³ Interview with Abu Jamil and Umm Jamil Andraos, Tarshiha, October 22, 2018.

Abu Jamil: A hanging beam...

Umm Jamil: Over on that side it used to be very high, so I would dress up like that [i.e., like a male worker], with pants and everything, and I would go like this with my stomach [Umm Jamil mimics dragging herself on her stomach] and grab it [the beam] from above, and after that he would do the formwork.

Nimrod: So, you did everything? You were assistant form maker, assistant ironworker [I continued using the male gendered term for assistant]?

Umm Jamil: I did more than a young man! [Umm Jamil laughs] I had to!

Abu Jamil: I would tell her, make this for me... She would make the sand, the gravel, sand and cement. I would mix it, she starts handing it to me, and I would cast the pillars. Me and her. Me and her...

Umm Jamil: the kids were [about] ten years old, the little one was still little, the other was older. I would give them a small bucket and tell them, "help me, do like this [Umm Jamil mimics pouring sand]. Once you've done ten each, I'll give you a popsicle."⁴⁶⁴

Umm Jamil's initial use of the masculine-gendered Hebrew term for assistant, *'ozer*, could be understood as a slip of the tongue, or as reflective of the perceived improbability of gendering the role female. However, understanding her use of the term as a "mistake" itself seems improbable once her description turns to her physical experience of the work – wearing a male worker's clothing, crawling on her stomach to grab the ceiling beam – and culminates in the claim that "[she] did more than a young man!" Rather, Umm Jamil's gender reversal in the narration reflects her keen and playful awareness of how she and Abu Jamil had defied the gendered division of labor.

Her description of how the couple's children participated in the construction as well, allows her to segue into clarifying that for her too building the house was a second shift job. Already a mother of three when they began construction, she recalls doing housework during the day ("all by hand... hard tasks"), making dinner and "then after four... *'ozer binyan* [Umm Jamil laughs, having invoked the reversal again]." Thus, it

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Abu Jamil and Umm Jamil Andraos, Tarshiha, October 22, 2018.

was not only the skills Abu Jamil learned at Solel Boneh, or the help of other community members that allowed the Andraos family to build their home despite meagre means.

Umm Jamil and Abu Jamil's temporary suspension of the gendering of construction as masculine labor, and Umm Jamil's willingness to take on physical tasks she herself saw as masculine, was crucial.

Narrators frequently described the emergence of these homemaking practices primarily in terms of financial necessity. However, in its defiance of state policies which sought to curtail Palestinian construction, building homes in the second shift was already a political act. This was made amply clear when the state stepped in via its military administration, and actively targeted Palestinian construction for demolition. In such instances, construction workers' skills could place them opposite the state, at the frontline. Ibrahim Shamshoum, recalls one such event in 'Arrabe which almost cost him his life:

One day, in 1957, they [the military administration] destroyed a house here in 'Arrabe, saying that it was built without a permit. And we wanted to build it, my friends and me. The entire Party [i.e., the Communist Party members in 'Arrabe] and I were able to gather the whole village and we decided to help them build it [the house]. That same day we started building it again, we built it that same day and when we started casting the concrete, the police, the Military Police came, and they beat me nearly to death. To the point, that my mother was told that day, "Ibrahim is dead" (*Ibrahim mat*).⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, 'Arrabe, October 12, 2018. The intense violence of the military's reaction that day meant that the episode received considerable coverage from the Arabic and Hebrew communist press in particular. This has also allowed me to find its exact date – July 1, 1957. On July 2, 1957, a day after the events, both *al-Ittihad* and the party's Hebrew language publication, *Kol ha-'Am* (Voice of the People) reported what had taken place in 'Arrabe on their front pages. Both newspapers also placed the military's violence in the context of the oppression of the military administration in general and of specific events. *Al-Ittihad*'s subtitle for the article stated that the police behaved with "intense brutality that evoked the dreadful memory of Kafr Qasim (*bi-wahshia baligha ba'athat dhikrat kafr qasim al-rahiba*)." *Al-Ittihad*, July 2, 1957, 1; *Kol ha-'Am*, July 2, 1957, 1. The Hebrew daily *Ma'ariv* meanwhile, reported on the police force's arrival to 'Arrabe, following "several warnings," without mention of the police's violence, nor of any arrests. *Ma'ariv*, July 2, 1957, 3.

While this was the worst violent beating Ibrahim suffered during his many years of activism, it was hardly his first time being arrested for defying or challenging policies he viewed as unjust.⁴⁶⁶ Nor was it the last time the military administration tried to curtail his building activities in ‘Arrabe. In 1964, the administration prevented him from completing the construction of his own house, he says, for a period of “a whole year, twelve months (*sineh tameh, tnashar shahr*).” Finally, after a year had passed, Ibrahim called forty or so his “groups of comrades” (*jama ‘at rifaqi*). “We cast the roof in four hours,” he laughs.⁴⁶⁷



Fig. 5.6 Ibrahim Shamshoum and friends gathering around a cement mixer during the construction of Ibrahim’s house, 1965. Photo courtesy of the Shamshoum family.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibrahim and several other Communist Party members in ‘Arrabe were arrested multiple times for organizing a protest against the “education tax” which the Israeli state levied solely on Palestinian citizens. Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, ‘Arrabe, October 12, 2018; *Kol ha-‘Am*, October 11, 1955, 2. For more on the “education tax”, see: al-Haj, *Education*, 62-64.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with Ibrahim Shamshoum, ‘Arrabe, October 12, 2018.

Conclusion

The incorporation of many Palestinian men into a nascent Israel's construction industry was overdetermined by an array of historical events and processes stemming from the Nakba and the subsequent policies of the Israeli state. Economic distress, land expropriation, restrictions on employment and movement, and curtailment of educational and professional prospects, all meant that Palestinians were left with little choice as to where to seek employment. The construction industry's absorption of so many Palestinian men desperate to find work was part of the industry's racialization, whereby physical labor gradually became dominated first by Mizrahi Jews and then by Palestinian Arabs, as Jews of European origins moved into managerial positions and professionalized occupations.

Unsurprisingly then, the history of this incorporation from the perspective of Palestinian construction workers is one of dangerous and difficult work, harsh living conditions, and child and teenage labor. It is also a history of their encounter with their own racialization - of being cast as a threat, sexually and otherwise; being forced to hide in plain sight; and experiencing the dangers and humiliations of segregation. At the same time, however, through the narratives of workers and their families, other facets of this history emerge. A history of personal and communal ingenuity, of relationships built and of remarkable capacities to adapt – materially, culturally, and socially – not merely in order to survive harsh conditions borne of oppression, but also to find ways to challenge, change, and overcome them. Not only by refusing to let go of your home and your homeland, but of constantly finding new ways to remake and reclaim it.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation's inquiry ends in 1973 not because the phenomena it explores – the ties between the history of construction and the formation of a racialized social hierarchy in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel – suddenly unraveled. If anything, following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 war, those ties were drawn tighter still. Palestinians from the occupied territories, devoid of citizenship and subject to military rule, were swiftly incorporated into Israel's workforce in the following years. If roughly 6 percent of the Palestinian workforce in the West Bank and Gaza Strip worked in Israel by 1968, by 1974 nearly a third of the workforce did so. By 1975, Palestinians from the occupied territories constituted nearly 30 percent of the entire workforce of the Israeli construction industry.⁴⁶⁸ Stripped of the gains which Palestinian with Israeli citizenship had made as workers in the decades prior to 1967 and of even the most basic protections of citizenship, non-citizen Palestinian subjects were, and remain, an extremely vulnerable population. Precarity and racialized devaluation remained bound together with construction work, and, as Leila Farsakh has shown, inextricably linked to Israeli state policies of expropriating Palestinian lands and limiting Palestinian economic development, this time beyond the so-called "Green Line," which demarcates Israel's internationally recognized borders.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ Yael Berda, *Living Emergency*, 20; Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration*, 125, 209.

⁴⁶⁹ Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration*, Chapter 5. As Farsakh notes, in her study of the Gaza Strip's "de-development" under Israeli rule, Sara Roy has also called attention to this relationship between Israeli government aims to gain control of Palestinian lands and dispossess Palestinians, and the latter's incorporation into Israel's labor force as exploited migrant laborers. Roy, *The Gaza Strip*. Several scholarly and cinematic works examine the experiences of Palestinian laborers working across the "Green Line." See: Avram S. Bornstein, *Crossing the Green Line Between the West Bank and Israel* (Philadelphia:

Nor has this outsourcing of exploitative practices been restricted to the non-citizen Palestinian labor force. If, before 1967, Israel excavated much of its building stone from under the feet of the Palestinian citizens who remained in the state, in the decades since it has come to rely on the stone reserves of the occupied West Bank. Unburdened by environmental and health and safety regulations which exist within Israel's de jure boundaries and aided by the state, Israeli quarrying in the West Bank has caused environmental devastation. The growing international demand for Palestinian stone, paired with often limited access to their own agricultural lands, the dire economic straits in the West Bank, and the neoliberal economic policies of the Palestinian Authority, have led some Palestinians to "carve their own land," as architect and critic Yara Sharif has put it, to support themselves and their families.⁴⁷⁰

Indeed, an attempt to trace all the ways in which construction work, the ability to build (and increasingly, to demolish), and even the business entities populating the construction industry, remain part and parcel of the colonial, exploitative structure the erection of which this dissertation has narrated, would likely furnish an infuriating and tragic laundry list. From the Israeli Right's notion that construction in illegal settlements

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); *Malon 9 Kokhavim* [Nine Star Hotel], directed by Ido Haar (2006; Israel/Palestine; Eden Productions), DVD; Suad Amiry, *Nothing to Lose but Your Life: My 18-Hour Journey with Murad* (Doha: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation, 2010); *Mutasalilun* [Infiltrators], directed by Khaled Jarrar (2012; Palestine/Lebanon/United Arab Emirates; Dubai Media and Entertainment Organization), DVD; Ross, *Stone Men*, Chapter 5. Nowhere have Palestinian construction workers been more crucial in recent decades than in the building of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. See: Matthew Vickery, *Employing the Enemy: The Story of Palestinian Labourers on Israeli Settlements* (London: Zed Books, 2017).

⁴⁷⁰ Yara Sharif, *Architecture of Resistance: Cultivating Moments of Possibility within the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2017), 124 & Chapter 4; Idan Landau, "Hotzvim et Falastin, Bonim et Israel" [Excavating Palestine, Building Israel], *Lo Lamut Tipesheh*, June 30, 2016 <https://idanlandau.com/2016/06/30/mining-palestine-building-israel/> [accessed: July 1, 2020]; Ross, *Stone Men*.

was the “proper Zionist response” (*tguva tziyonit holemet*) to all manners of perceived Palestinian and international encroachments on Israel, held and acted upon since the late 1970s; to the disastrous equations of demolition endorsed by current Israeli leadership, whereby the homes of Palestinians within Israel built without a permit are demolished to appease popular rightwing anger at government demolitions of structures in illegal settlements in the West Bank, under the guise of “equitable enforcement.” Looming over these trajectories, the ongoing preponderance of injury and unsafe work in Israel’s construction industry – particularly in “wet work” jobs in which Palestinians constitute the overwhelming majority – raises the question of how certain lives and bodies become less valuable than others.⁴⁷¹ A question which I hope this dissertation has done some work to address, even as the topic of work accidents proper has remained outside its scope.

But perhaps, in the spirit of this dissertation’s final chapter and the relationship between construction in the material sense and as metaphor, it would be better to conclude with an example of how the history this dissertation has examined is shaping a Palestinian politics presently seeking to build a fundamentally different future in Palestine/Israel. Since the 2015 Israeli elections, the Joint List – a coalition of Palestinian and Palestinian-led parties – has reintroduced the promise of foundational change into Israel/Palestine’s increasingly stagnant and bleak political landscape. Bringing together the socialist Hadash party, the liberal-national Balad, and other smaller Islamic and

⁴⁷¹ “Work Accidents in the Construction Sector,” n.d., Kav la-‘Oved <https://www.kavlaoved.org.il/en/areasofactivity/work-accidents-in-the-construction-sector/> [accessed: 17 March 2020]; Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2017).

secular parties, the Joint List presented, for the first time since 1948, a united Palestinian political front within Israel.⁴⁷²

Formed partially in response to a law which sought to effectively disenfranchise most Palestinian citizens in Israel by raising the percentage of votes required to win a place in the Israeli Knesset, the state's parliament, the party won thirteen seats in its first elections in 2015, making it the country's third largest party. After internal differences between its constituent parties and the List's dismantling led to disappointing results in the April 2019 elections, the List was reformed in July of that year.⁴⁷³ In the subsequent parliamentary elections, in September 2019 and March 2020, the Joint List won thirteen and fifteen seats, respectively. Viewed alongside the steady shrinking of the Zionist Left into political insignificance, the explicitly non-Zionist Palestinian List's ability to repeatedly receive the third highest number of votes, an unprecedented achievement, has the potential to radically transform parliamentary politics within Israel.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² As'ad Ghanem, "Israel's Second-Class Citizens: Arabs in Israel and the Struggle for Equal Rights," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (July-August 2016): 37-42.

⁴⁷³ Jack (Jacky) Khoury, "*Le'ahar Krisat ha-Reshima ha-Meshutefet, be-Hevra ha-'Aravit Notru be-'ikar 'im Da'agot*" [Following the Collapse of the Joint List, Arab Society is Left Mostly with Concerns], *Ha'aretz*, February 23, 2019 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/elections/.premium-1.6960747> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]; Samah Salameh, "*Hakamata me-Hadash shel ha-Reshima ha-Meshutefet Mahzira et ha-Mahrimim ha-Baita*" [The Re-establishment of the Joint List Brings the Boycotters Back Home], *Siha Mekomit*, August 13, 2019.

⁴⁷⁴ Mahmoud Majadleh, "*al-Qa'ima al-Mushtarika Tuqaddim Qai'mat Murassahiha li-l-Knesset al-23*" [The Joint List Presents its List of Candidates for the 23rd Knesset], *'Arab 48*, January 15, 2020 <https://www.arab48.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/2020/01/15/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%87%D8%A7-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%83%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8023> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]. On the radical potential of the Joint List's successes, see: Omri Boehm, "After Liberal Zionism, the One Hope for a Democratic Israel," *The New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/06/09/after-liberal-zionism-the-one-hope-for-a-democratic-israel/> [last accessed: July 1, 2020].

The rise of the Joint List in Israel's politics has placed the history of construction work and the construction industry in the political limelight in two important ways – through policy demands and biography. In recent years, parties on the Israeli Right have made a motto of the “enforcement” of building regulations – a euphemism for increased house demolitions in Palestinian towns within Israel, and controls and restrictions on Palestinian locales’ and citizens’ economic and social development. In response, the Joint List’s leadership has repeatedly raised the banner of regularization of so-called “illegal construction,” the freezing of all demolition orders in Palestinian localities and the annulment of legislation intended to intensify “enforcement.” In doing so, the List has insisted on the explicitly political and racist nature of an issue which Jewish Israeli politicians and public discourse have tended to associate with Arab “lawlessness” (even if this association is often accompanied by a wink).⁴⁷⁵

Two of the Joint List’s leaders, Ayman Odeh and Aida Touma-Sliman, both of the communist wing of the socialist Hadash party, have publicly emphasized the role construction work has had in their own personal biographies. In interviews, on the podium of the Israeli Parliament, even in a profile of Odeh’s in the *New Yorker*, Odeh

⁴⁷⁵ Jack Khoury and Yonatan Liss, “*Ha-Reshima ha-Meshutefet Tatziv le-Kahol Lavan Drishot ke-Tnai le-Hamlatza Bifney ha-Nasi*” [The Joint List will Present Blue and White with Demands as Conditions for a Recommendation before the President], *Ha’aretz*, September 21, 2019 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/elections/premium-1.7870600> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]. The List has also been at the forefront of drawing attention to the critical state of work safety in Israel’s construction industry. “*Va’adat ha-‘Avoda Ishra le-Kri’a Rishona: Atar Bniya she-‘Ir’a bo Teunat ‘Avoda Kasha – Yisager*” [The Labor Committee Approved for a First Reading: Construction Sites Where a Severe Accident Occurred will be Closed], *Knesset News*, June 21, 2016 <https://main.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/pages/press21616c.aspx> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]; Lee Yaron, “*Be-Shel Ribui Te’unot ha-‘Bniya: ha-Knesset Hekima Va’ada le-Betihut ba-‘Avoda*” [Due to the Multiplicity of Construction Accidents: the Knesset has Established a Work Safety Committee], *Ha’aretz* July 3, 2017 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/premium-1.3906876> [last accessed: July 1, 2020].

and Touma-Sliman, both the children of construction workers, have claimed this aspect of their respective biographies as formative. Odeh's meteoric rise onto the national and international stage, in particular, has marked him as a unique, potentially generational leader. A self-stylized follower of Dr. Martin Luther King, his and Touma-Sliman's political visions stands in stark contrast to the increasingly explicit nationalist and racist tenor of mainstream Israeli Zionist politics.⁴⁷⁶ They are the children of the structure of racialized inequality and domination, the building of which this dissertation sought to cast light on. The structure itself still stands, taller and more imposing by the day. It has never been more urgent to bring it down. Tomorrow is today.

⁴⁷⁶ Roy Chicky Arad, "My Romance with Ayman Odeh," *Ha'aretz*, March 13, 2015 <https://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/premium-1.2587355> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]; "*H"K Aida Touma Sliman be-Ne'um ha-Bekhora: 'ha-Ratzon Leshanot et ha-Metzi'ut ha-Me'uvetet Haya Tamid ha-Meni'a la-Pe'ilut Sheli*" [Member of Knesset Aida Touma Sliman in Her Inaugural Speech: The Desire to Change the Convolutioned Reality Has Always Been the Motivation of My Work], *Knesset News*, May 4, 2015 <https://main.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/pages/press4515q.aspx> [last accessed: July 1, 2020]; David Remnick, "A Palestinian Israeli Leader for Peace," *The New Yorker*, January 18, 2016 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/01/25/seeds-of-peace> [last accessed: July 1, 2020].

APPENDIX I

Identity Card/Mahmoud Darwish, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies⁴⁷⁷ (1964)

Write it down.

I am an Arab

And the number of my card is fifty thousand

I have eight children

And the ninth is due after summer.

Does that anger you?

Write it down.

I am an Arab

Working with comrades of toil in a quarry.

I have eight children

For them I wrest the loaf of bread,

The clothes and exercise books

From the rocks

And beg for no alms at your door,

Lower not myself at your doorstep.

Does that anger you?

Write it down.

I am an Arab.

I am a name without a title,

Patient in a country where everything

Lives in a whirlpool of anger.

My roots

Took hold before the birth of time

Before the burgeoning of the ages,

Before cypress and olive trees,

Before the proliferation of weeds.

My father is from the family of the plough

Not from highborn nobles.

And my grandfather was a peasant

Without line or genealogy.

My house is a watchman's hut

Made of sticks and reeds.

⁴⁷⁷ I have made some small alterations to Denys Johnson-Davies' original translation. I replaced the recurring word "record" for *sajjil*, with the phrase, "write it down"; the recurring question "What's there to be angry about?" for "*fa-hal tughdib?*", with "Does that make you angry?"; and I have inserted, in brackets, the omitted line "Love communism" in the fourth verse.

Does my status satisfy you?
 I am a name without a surname.

Write it down.
 I am an Arab.
 Color of hair: jet black.
 Color of eyes: brown.
 My distinguishing features:
 On my head the 'iqal cords over a keffiyeh
 Scratching him who touches it.
 My address:
 I'm from a village, remote, forgotten,
 Its streets without name
 And all its men in the fields and quarry.
 [Love communism]
 Does that anger you?

Write it down.
 I am an Arab.
 You stole my forefathers' vineyards
 And land I used to till,
 I and all my children,
 And you left us and all my grandchildren
 Nothing but these rocks.
 Will your government be taking them too
 As is being said?

So!
 Write it down at the top of page one:
 I don't hate people,
 I trespass on no one's property.
 And yet, if I were to become hungry
 I shall eat the flesh of my usurper.
 Beware, beware of my hunger
 And of my anger!

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Hed ha-Mizrah

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